

Karen Agnich '88: making the health care system work

With its daunting cost issues, competing interests and regulatory complexity, it requires so little for any health care situation to become, or at least seem to be, a tangled web. It's the mission of Karen Agnich at AdvoCare, the company she co-founded, to disentangle those webs or, better yet, set up a process so that there is less confusion. Agnich, initially a registered nurse, is an experienced and highly successful health care professional whose mission it is to make the system work.

As good as they seem to be, AdvoCare doesn't deal with the totality of health care. Part of their territory is the segment of workmen's compensation. AdvoCare works with injured employees, their employers and insurance providers. Together they develop a treatment plan, monitor cost and quality of care and establish return to work goals for the injured employee.

Agnich's company works very hard to make everyone happy. "From the first report of an injury, through a successful return to work, we strive to provide significant cost containment without sacrificing customer service or optimal patient care."

Equipped, not only with a nursing degree, but also with an undergraduate diploma in health services administration from Ursuline and an MBA from Cleveland State, Agnich clearly has the credentials, ambition and vision to become a significant force in health care in Northeast Ohio, and she has.

"Ursuline provided me with a base from which to move into administration," said Agnich. She also attests to the demands and satisfactions of being a successful entrepreneur: "As an entrepreneur your work becomes your life. You live and breathe your job 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Each step you take is not only for your success but for the success of your employees."

Agnich also knows a thing or two about collaboration. "Working as a team not only helps you to grow, but helps your organization become the company that clients want to work with," she said. According to Agnich, employees who



care about their job attract clients because the clients feel they are more likely to receive exceptional customer service.

In 2001, Agnich was named one of the Top Ten Women Business Owners of Northeast Ohio. AdvoCare has garnered both the Weatherhead 100 and the Northcoast 99 awards for business growth and for being a great place to work. Moreover, in 2002 Agnich took the National Association of Women Business Owners crown as the 2002 Woman Business Owner of the Year.

When she started, Agnich was an emergency room and intensive care nurse. She moved into health care administration by taking charge of the managed care program for the eastern portion of the country at Parker Hannifin. From Parker, she moved to United Healthcare (UH) where she became vice president for managed care services of UH.

Then, in 1996, she created AdvoCare, which has thrived and now has approximately 40 registered nurses and 30 call center operators serving the medical case management needs of an employee base in excess of 200,000 workers.

Agnich isn't particularly high profile, but she is an entrepreneurial performer of notable power and significance in regional health care. She is also a woman who exemplifies the vision and values that Ursuline College strives to reinforce in its graduates, and she certainly embodies the power of the Ursuline woman's voice in the marketplace.