

ST. LOUIS *Women*

ON THE MOVE

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THE FACE OF HEALTHCARE**

Passionate Nurses, Enterprising Businesswomen

by Laura Schacht, Photographed by Matt Piskulic

Even as American healthcare struggles to adapt to mounting pressures for quality patient care as well as a healthy bottom line, opportunities for innovative nursing and medical professionals to employ new ideas have never been so numerous – or exciting. Ask Laurie Jaccard and Barbara Madison, two enterprising businesswomen and CEOs who founded their own healthcare companies.

“The healthcare industry is filled with opportunities...a professional science degree is a great preparation for almost any career,” says Madison. “You can do anything with a nursing degree—you acquire the critical thinking skills that make you capable of taking advantage of tremendous entrepreneurial opportunities.”

Everyone dreads the thought of ending up in a nursing home. As Baby Boomers head toward their golden years, they are thinking about the what-if’s of life and how they will manage the inevitable challenges that come with aging. Demand for in-home healthcare and assisted living has risen in recent years as Boomers, having nursed their own parents through old age, now prepare for their own. And Boomer Barbara Madison, an RN for over 25 years and CEO of Right At Home, which she founded in 2004, is determined to revolutionize the home care industry one patient at a time.

There was never a question that nursing would be her career—she loved helping others from the time she was a young girl. In her thirties, she watched as her mother, also

an RN, cared for her father, who suffered from Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases simultaneously. While her mother’s round-the-clock care was heroic, the toll of carrying the entire burden of his care made

“It seems that all of my experiences have built on one another to lead me to this place,”

a lasting impact on Madison – who even then thought surely there must be some way to ease this experience.

Madison, who started her career in obstetrics nursing once she finished training, was satisfied with the sense of well-being she felt by helping others. And while she found clinical medicine rewarding, she never forgot how hard it was to care for her own father in his own home. Surely, she thought, there had to be a way to take high quality professional nursing care to a home

care environment out in the community at large.

In a dramatic career move in 2001, she accepted a position to join General Electric Financial Advisors to sell long-term care insurance.

These policies provide benefits for short-term in-home care or facility care as well as longer-term solutions. Realizing that most Baby Boomers would not

want to end up in a nursing home as so many of their parents and grandparents had, she set about reaching a market the company had hitherto overlooked as “too young” for elder services.

Over time, her medical training, clinical expertise, personal experience and marketing savvy enabled her to create a client base - Boomers then in their forties and fifties - where none had been. So successful was she in convincing this demographic of their impending need that, within a year, she’d become the

#1 sales agent, and shortly thereafter a valuable member of the leadership team.

Synchronicity

Never say never. When a former GE colleague called and asked her to consider going into a home healthcare franchise with him, she balked. Satisfied with her position with GE, she had little interest in leaving, but his persistence eventually wore her down, and she joined him to meet with the franchisor. Ironically, her friend (not the franchisor) lost interest in the deal – and she got excited for the first time about possibilities she'd not considered before. Without any hesitation, she bought the Right at Home franchise for the greater St. Louis area three months later.

"It seems that all of my experiences have built on one another to lead me to this place," says Madison. "The exciting thing is that it is a place where I can make a positive impact on each family that I serve and the community as a whole. It is so fulfilling."

Because of her background in nursing, and later the long-term care insurance industry, she knew she could deliver what Baby Boomers wanted in home health care – control. Two and a half years and 300 patients later, Right At Home has earned a reputation for meeting those healthcare challenges this unique population so often present, with a level of intelligence, competence and comfort rare in the field.

Developing her People

In such intimate work as elder care, the quality of the caregivers is central to success of the company. And giving workers a professional wage and benefits has always been

a challenge to a home health care industry renowned for low wages. "Because this is such hard work, I am determined to pay a professional wage to these remarkable caregivers," says Madison.

"Barb is unique in wanting to reward her employees by offering a variety of supportive programs, resources and services," says Karen Hoffman, Madison's Business Coach. "She is continually working on coaching, mentoring and training programs to help her staff achieve more of what they want in their lives which is a solid financial plan, training, and professional development."

To that end, she has established an alliance with Connections to Success—a program of services that offer employment readiness and retention, life-skills training, career development, transportation, and faith-based mentoring. This alliance has brought valuable resources and tools to the Right at Home staff resulting in improved retention and morale.

Right at Home St. Louis continues to grow, the company continues to gain new clients, even as more companies enter the field of elder care.

"Barb has so many special gifts, but the one thing that I find most inspiring is her passion not only for what she does, but I think most im-



BARBARA MADISON, RN

portantly, the passion she has for her patients and their families," says Hoffman. "Barb truly loves her clients and loves serving them."

Always seeking ways to collaborate and develop her skills as a new CEO, Madison is a member of the Women Presidents Organization in St. Louis, a national peer advisory board for women business owners with revenue above \$1 million dollars. Madison said, "I have never been afraid to work hard, I feel passionate about what I'm doing and I'm surrounded by extraordinary people who share my passion."

Alzheimer & Dementia

Deeply affected by her father's struggle with Alzheimer's disease, Madison was determined to develop a program that would improve the quality of life for its victims and those of dementia.

The approach is aptly known as HEART. Heart stands for: Home Environment Activities-Recreation Therapies. This innovative, one-of-a-kind program is available exclusively at Right at Home of St. Louis.

Those affected by dementia greatly benefit from engaging in purposeful and meaningful activities and exercises such as bowling, puzzles, or anything that stimulates the areas of the brain that are most affected. "While we cannot necessarily reverse or stop the progression of most dementias, we can positively impact the behaviors that people exhibit as a part of their disease and improve their quality of life," says Madison.

Often, the primary caregiver has very little experience in managing the symptoms of dementia and is often frustrated and overwhelmed.

They experience anxiety, isolation, fear—and ultimately exhaustion as time goes by and the disease progresses. This is the ideal candidate for Right at Home's HEART program.

HEART was developed by Madison and another nurse in St. Louis when both realized there is a huge need to help families who face this complex and consuming challenge. The program is individually tailored to the person with dementia by a registered nurse and a licensed Recreation Therapist. The challenges and behaviors of the patient

are considered and a plan devised. Once the program begins, it is monitored and adjusted to maximize positive results.

"We do a nursing assessment for all our clients, but we feel strongly that a properly trained recreation therapist can bring a dimension to the care plan for an individual who has dementia that might otherwise be overlooked,"

says Fenlon, whose experience includes extensive training from the Alzheimer's Association as well as years of practical experience in the field working with persons with dementia and Alzheimer's.

"We have seen the most remarkable results with families; not only have we been able to dramatically impact negative behaviors in dementia patients, but we have created peace of mind and confidence

for their caregivers who ultimately feel better equipped to care for the people they love," says Madison.

The program also provides an opportunity to educate and involve family members so they can better manage their role as caregivers. Right at Home HEART therapy can also serve as a period of respite for the primary caregivers so that they can focus on their own lives.

"Seeing dad engaged in life again is so amazing. His anxiety has been greatly reduced and the repetitive questions are all but gone from his daily routine. He's happier, and so is my mom as a result. We had pretty much given up that there was anything that would make a difference for dad, but having Marvin and the HEART activities program has been a real gift."

Susan W., St. Louis, Missouri



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Our mission: Improving the quality of life for those we serve.