



**Denise Wilder Warren**

*Senior Vice President and  
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Capella Healthcare, Inc.

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It's a long way from a North Carolina farm to an executive office at Capella Healthcare, but many of the lessons learned in the barnyard have translated well to the boardroom.

"It's really important, I think, to come from an area that grounds you in the basics of life," noted Denise Warren. "When you have such strong roots in right and wrong, it sets that foundation for your morals and values and stays with you for the rest of your life."

Growing up on a tobacco and pig farm, Warren's work ethic was instilled at a young age with hands-on chores. "I didn't know what I wanted to do when I grew up, but I knew what I didn't want to do," she said with a laugh.

Ultimately, she figured it out. After earning an associate's degree, Warren began her career with Ernst & Young in Raleigh where she met her husband, Michael. After marrying, the couple transferred to Dallas, and Warren had the opportunity to complete her bachelor's degree at Southern Methodist University. Graduating Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude, she went on to earn a master's degree from Harvard.

Along the way, she built an impressive resume as a financial analyst working in Dallas and New York before being lured to Nashville to serve as CFO of Gaylord Entertainment Company. After a leadership change at Gaylord and taking time off to have daughter, Madeleine, Warren was working with Avondale Partners in 2005 when she received a call from Capella co-founder Tom Anderson.

He was seeking a CFO recommendation for his new company. Warren said she spent 20 minutes talking up someone else when Anderson said, 'well, we were kind of interested in you.' Although the interest was certainly mutual, Warren emphasized she knew very little about the industry. "He said, 'you can't teach us anything about healthcare since we've

all worked in healthcare our entire careers. What we need you for is the finance side,'" she recalled. "I've never since doubted my decision to join Capella. It is an incredible company with incredible people, and I am incredibly lucky to be here."

Warren started in October 2005, and the company bought its first four hospitals in December that year. "We started with \$0 net revenue, and now we're just south of \$900 million in net revenue. We have 13 hospitals in seven states ... so we've been just a little busy," she noted of the impressive growth in spite of a challenging economic climate. However, she stressed, Capella measures its success less in dollars and cents and more in providing exceptional patient care. "Without that, the rest doesn't matter," she said.

Clearly, healthcare has become an integral part of Warren's day ... both on the clock and off. She is an active volunteer with the American Heart Association and is the 2011 chair of the "Go Red for Women" campaign for Middle Tennessee. "I am passionate about educating women about heart disease," she said. "It kills one in three women while breast cancer kills one in 29. It's unbelievable to me that people don't know this."

Warren has seen firsthand the devastation of heart disease. Her own mother died last year from congestive heart failure. Warren wants to ensure Madeleine, now 10, doesn't have the same experience. To take action against heart disease, the Warrens enjoy active sports, and they all run. She has completed four half-marathons, and Michael has just completed his fifth.

Although a long way from North Carolina, Warren strives to bring the lessons of her childhood to the hospitals she serves and to her own home. "I want to be a role model for my daughter ... both personally and professionally."