DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Meet CFO Awards winner Angela Oakley

Angela Oakley

Organization: WellPower

Years in current role: 8

Years in profession: 35

Describe your role: As chief financial officer, I am responsible for safeguarding the financial well-being of the organization so we can be here well into the future. We need a strong financial foundation to continue to provide life-changing behavioral health services for more than 25,000 people each year through the talent and hard work of our 1,000-plus staff members.

Big change: A significant change has been getting the organization ready to shift from a capitation to a fee-for-service funding environment. For 35 years we've operated under a capitation model and built robust business processes accordingly. This is not just a change in our largest source of revenue; it is a significant cultural shift for the organization.

Next goal: The next goal is to not only survive, but thrive, in the fee-for-service world. My role is to use clear information to support executive leadership in making important decisions about our programs and where to focus our energies. It will be through an honest look at the data, our educated projections and our clear business strategy that we will be able to achieve this goal.

Tell us about your leadership style. How does it help you get the most out of your team? I strive to be a servant leader, and to me that means I lead by example. I do have high expectations and I challenge my teams to do their best, and I provide the support and tools they need to be successful. I also try to be intentional about creating space for my team to share their thoughts, concerns and ideas. I'm not always right, and it's important that my team has space to be free to explore and come up with new ideas. That's how we all get better — by contributing our strengths and our creativity towards solutions to big problems.

What is an "aha" moment you've had in your career? My "aha" moment was years ago when an executive coach observed that I was very quiet, and when I did speak up I had great ideas. He encouraged me to share my ideas sooner. The first time I did that it was scary. I don't remember what the idea was but I do remember the reactions of my colleagues — everyone was so appreciative. Since then, I haven't held back in sharing my ideas.

What is the best advice anyone ever gave you? Did you listen? "Listen to understand before being understood." That was a stand-out piece of advice and is the foundation of who I am today. I try to thoughtfully listen first before I start offering my solutions because it's important to understand the problem before approaching a solution. It's also true that sometimes people just want to be heard and don't want me to solve the problem. Sometimes we need solutions, and sometimes I know I just need to sit back and hear people's ideas based on what they're needing in that moment.

Who inspires you and why? My mom. Even though she passed away 10 years ago, she continues to inspire me because of her perseverance. She was a quiet fighter — you wouldn't necessarily even know she was fighting because she would keep trying and keep trying. She just didn't give up — if one way didn't work she'd try another way, and another. Mom was both passionate and compassionate, always sticking up for herself, for us, for the underdog. She didn't make a big deal about it, either — it's just the way she was. To this day I often ask myself when making key decisions, "What would Mom say?"

Anything else? Throughout my career, the decisions I've made and the challenges I've faced have helped make me who I am. Many of the decisions I've made have been the right decisions and not the easy ones — I'm not afraid of taking the hard path because sometimes that's the right one. Each time has built my character and really shaped me to be who I am today.

Nonprofit Nominees

- Patti Arroyo, CSU Global, Acting CBO and VP of Finance & Administration
- Michael Burke, Mile High United Way, CFO
- Jim Carpenter, Metropolitan State University of Denver, CFO
- James Cousin, II, The Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses (AORN), CFO and Chief Diversity Officer
- Matthew Gal, AdventHealth Castle Rock, CFO
- Kenneth R. Kirwin, Colorado Gives Foundation, CFO and COO
- Matthew S. Lovetro, Donor Alliance, CFO
- Heather MacKendrick Costa, Food Bank of the Rockies, CFO
- Angela Oakley, WellPower, CFO
- Mike Pritchard, ACE Scholarships, CFO
- Patti Schwartzberg, Denver Scholarship Foundation, CFO and CAO
- Henry Sobanet, Colorado State University System, CFO
- Lynne Winchell, Community College of Aurora, VP of Operations and CFO