

Carlos Reyes: A Life and Career of Commitment to the Community

by John Fries

Carlos Reyes has always been interested in helping his community. It's likely that many of the people with whom he grew up in Miami and Hollywood would, if asked, recall him as a "model citizen."

It's heartening to realize that his strong commitment to the community has stayed with him through his high school, college and law school years. Moreover, it continues well into his career as a successful attorney with Greenberg Traurig LLP, an international, full-service law firm with more than 1,100 attorneys and governmental professionals in 24 offices in the United States and Europe, include six offices in Florida.



Today, Reyes serves as Past Chairman and Commissioner of the Memorial Healthcare System board of trustees and as a partner at Greenberg Traurig. In these roles, and as a private citizen, he is almost exhaustingly active as he continues to serve the community in many ways. He's a dedicated blood donor and a visible supporter of the Memorial Blood Bank. He speaks to groups about various issues. Fifteen years ago, he co-founded the Hispanic Bar Association of Broward County, which has been instrumental in addressing issues that impact Hispanic and minority lawyers. He helps many charitable organizations and has been recognized with countless awards for his services, but to him, the real reward is the opportunity to

help others.

"I've always been interested in – and passionate about – community work," said Reyes, who, during a recent phone interview, was exceedingly genuine, friendly and accommodating. "I realized a long time ago that when you have your health, you have everything. That's why I'm so glad to be part of the Memorial Healthcare System board."

Reyes, who focuses his practice in governmental affairs, real estate and international law, was appointed to the Memorial board by Governor Jeb Bush in 1999. "Because I work with the law all day long," he said, "I wanted to get involved with something that would impact the community in a different way." He found it at Memorial. "There's about a 12- to 18-month learning curve for new trustees," he said. "You have to gain an understanding of the health system bureaucracy, the processes that make it work, and the key acronyms and issues of the day, such as DRGs and reimbursement concerns."

He holds Frank Sacco, Memorial's CEO, and the other board members in high esteem, and was eager to be involved in health system governance. For his part, Sacco has been quoted in print regarding his admiration for Reyes as well, calling him "one of the best."

Initially, the experience was eye-opening and provided Reyes with a new perspective on the health care landscape.

"Eighty-five percent of health systems are suffering, and the environment is more complex than ever," he said. "One remedy is taxed with another remedy. We have to be at the top of our game when it concerns patient care, as well as on top of quality, technology and the impact of the ever increasing indigent care dilemma. This is a major undertaking."

As a new board member, Reyes was surprised by the complexity inherent in running a health system. "As citizens, we take things for granted and assume everything will just "happen" when we arrive at the hospital. Most people don't realize how complex the delivery of healthcare is today. More importantly, how challenging it is to address a patient's medical condition and emotional state which is also tested in times of medical crisis." However, he added, "Memorial Health System and its administration, physicians and employees are phenomenal. Each area has and deals with their particular nuances. We try to be proactive, not reactive. Our objective, ultimately, is to deliver a healthy Broward County."

He added that Memorial is also ahead of the curve in a number of areas. "For example, Time Magazine featured a major story about Medicare errors a few years ago. We had identified Medicare errors as an area of focus and had begun addressing it six months prior to the publication of the Time article."

There have been some crucial issues to address, one of which is the cost of medical malpractice premiums for physicians. With rates rising dramatically, in some cases 50 to 150% per physician, a solution was needed.

"Doctors and hospital administrators can sometimes be at odds with one another," Reyes admits. "But all parts are necessary, and everyone needs to be part of the solution. I've always encouraged participants in the system to be creative and think outside the "proverbial" box. We eliminated the burdensome insurance requirement the health system had for the doctors, while at the same time creating a captive insurance entity for our own pool of physicians which serves to assure that public welfare is still paramount."

Reyes is well traveled. After college, he attended law school at Rutgers University in New Jersey and, for a time, worked for AT&T in New York City and Washington, D.C. In 1986 he moved back home to Florida.

As active as Reyes is with his law firm, board and community commitments, he makes sure his professional life is balanced with quality family time. He and his wife of 20 years, Nancy, and their three children – Carlos III, 17; Alejandro, 14; and Marielena, 11 – live in the Southwest Ranches in Broward County. He loves spending time with them, whether at home, on vacation or attending Marlins games. He also enjoys playing golf.

"God has blessed me in many ways," said Reyes, "with the five Fs of life: faith, family, friends, finances, and fitness."