

LORISA LA ROCCA AND FAMILY

BY LAURI MCNIGHT

Children Awaiting Parents, Inc.'s (CAP) Executive Director, Lauri McKnight, caught up with CAP Board Chair Lorisa LaRocca to find out more about this talented and busy woman. Lorisa is a Partner in Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP's Labor & Employment Department, where she is the Practice Leader of the firm's Employment & Counseling group. In 2020, she succeeded Maryjane Link as Chair of CAP's Board of Directors.

What is your role as Chairperson of the Children Awaiting Parents (CAP) Board of Directors?

I view my role as Chair of the CAP Board as one that balances support of the organization's day-to-day activities by supporting you, as Executive Director, along with guiding CAP toward sustained growth as a longstanding community not-for-profit.

Tell us how your personal and/or professional trajectory led you to this position?

I have always had an inclination toward "giving back" and I consistently try to involve myself with organizations that I can use my professional talents as an attorney to support but also that call to me on a personal level. As an adoptive parent myself, CAP was one of those organizations that

I knew I wanted to make the time to become involved with at some point. After completing my term as Immediate Past President of the Women's Council, an affiliate of the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce, I was finally able to carve out that time.

What is it about CAP's work that resonates with you most?

that need forever families find them sooner rather than later.

What should the community know about CAP?

The community should know that CAP has been around for more than 40 years and that it is an organization with a strong foundation in the Greater Rochester community but that it is emerging into an even stronger

community partner, focusing not just on adoption but also on foster care services and programs to help those young adults who age out of the foster care system without ever having been adopted.

How has being on the board of CAP changed or expanded

your view of adoption from foster care?

Seeing how committed my fellow board members are to CAP's goal to help children transition from foster care into a forever family has been truly eye opening. Foster care and adoption touch people from every walk of life, and the only way that we can build a sustainable system that provides the services these children need to ensure that every child finds a



For me, it's really the idea that CAP focuses its efforts on working with children that have been in need of a forever family for the longest amount of time. Having seen first-hand the tremendous toll that being without a family takes on a child, we felt incredibly lucky to have adopted our oldest daughter, who we adopted internationally, after she barely turned one. It was a harrowing process but it cemented my desire to help ensure that as many children in our communities





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forever family is through the support of our entire community.

From your experience, what does the Rochester community have in its favor regarding community involvement and support?

From my work with a number of local non-profits over the last two decades, I can absolutely say that the culture of giving in Rochester is unlike that of any other community. People here are so committed to the concept of giving back, of supporting our organizations that rely on community support, and that willingness to donate their time, talent and treasure is a blessing.

Why is it important for women in your position to join a non-profit board?

I don’t know about “women in my position” but I think it’s vital that everyone give back to the community in whatever ways they can, small and large. Getting involved, making a difference—those are traits that I have tried to instill in all 3 of my daughters from a very young age, and I hope that they will carry with them the knowledge that they can and should do what they can to make our world a better place.

As people become more established and successful in their careers, I agree it is important for them to increase their level of commitment to non-profits by joining an organization’s Board. The visibility that professional women, in particular, have within the community

is critical to building a network of support for these organizations among other professional men and women. That support is necessary for the long-term sustainability of our non-profit sector.

You are a Rochester businesswoman who has received top community honors (named a Top Woman in Law by The Daily Record; recognized by the Rochester Women’s Network as one of Rochester’s “Up and Coming Businesswomen” and as an “Up and Coming Attorney” in the Rochester area; named a “Forty Under 40” recipient by the Rochester Business Journal; received University of Buffalo Law School’s Robert J. Connelly Award for Excellence in Trial Technique). What is your advice for up-and-coming businesswomen in the community?

While it’s always nice to have your professional achievements recognized with plaques and awards, I have found that the most important aspect of defining “success” comes from doing something that gives you a feeling of satisfaction. Of course, every day is not “living the dream” — there are days no matter how successful your career where you dream about winning the lottery and moving to a beach somewhere — but if there are more days that you go home feeling that sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, you will be “successful.”

What is your key to balancing your busy work and family life?

If only there was a magic key! For me it’s always been focusing on the fact that “balance” does not mean a 50/50 split each and every day. There are days where my work commitments require most of my time and I used to feel incredibly guilty if I missed putting my girls to bed or a big game. But, I eventually realized that I am tremendously lucky that I have a career and that I work for an organization that also provide me the flexibility to be able to coach their teams and travel for riding competitions on all those other days. And, I try not to miss any “major” milestones if I can help it!

If you weren’t a lawyer, what other career would you have pursued?

I always thought about joining the FBI!

Thank you Lorisa for your wonderful conversation and for the important work you do for CAP, the community, your firm and the children! I look forward to a successful year ahead with you as the chair of our Board of Directors. We are super glad you are here as an attorney and support to us all in Rochester not at the FBI!



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