



# Illinois Health and Hospital Association

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## **Naperville COO Sue Kaufman Set to Retire After 42 Years**

*Started as Receptionist; Climbed the Corporate Ladder*

Naperville—Chief Operating Officer Sue Kaufman will retire next week after 42 years of outstanding service at the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA)—Illinois’ leading hospital association. Kaufman’s journey at IHA began in 1975. One merger and thirteen job titles later, Kaufman ends her career on a high note as the second in command, next to IHA President and CEO A.J. Wilhelmi.

“In her 42 years with IHA, Sue Kaufman has been instrumental in advancing our mission of serving the Illinois hospital community and strengthening healthcare across the state,” said Wilhelmi. “Sue’s dedication to our members and our staff has been remarkable during her long tenure with the association, and her wisdom and guidance as a member of our senior leadership team has been invaluable. Sue will be sorely missed, and we wish her the very best in retirement.”

A retirement celebration for Kaufman was held in early June, at which many former coworkers attended, including former IHA CEO Ken Robbins, who retired in 2009. Robbins worked with Kaufman for 33 of her 42 years at IHA. “She was the first person to greet me in 1976, as the receptionist, when I walked in the door at IHA and was one of the last people I saw when I retired from IHA,” said Robbins. He noted Kaufman’s “willingness to roll up her sleeves to get the work done” and her ability to “connect with members and staff deep within hospitals, especially hospital volunteers,” were just a few of her many talents.

Kaufman’s strong connection with IHA’s Constituency on Volunteers (CoV)—dedicated to supporting, enhancing and expanding hospital volunteerism through education—has spanned decades. During this year’s CoV scholarship campaign, held annually to support students pursuing a healthcare-related career, \$4,000 of the \$36,000 raised was donated in Kaufman’s honor.

Former IHA President and CEO, Maryjane Wurth, who is now the Chief Strategy and Relationship Officer and President and CEO of the American Hospital Association’s (AHA’s) Health Forum, worked with Kaufman from 2009 to 2015. Wurth was impressed with Kaufman’s talents as a “natural leader” and her dedication to Illinois hospitals.

“Sue’s commitment to making healthcare better in Illinois has been unwavering throughout the years,” said Wurth. “To IHA and the members alike, Sue is a leader, teacher, coach, and role model in what advocacy and service means to Illinois hospitals and health systems.”

After 13 years of living in Naperville, Kaufman has made Aurora her home for the past 21 years. While she doesn’t have any immediate plans in retirement, she does intend to spend more time with her family—husband Chuck, daughter Cara, son-in-law Craig, and grandchildren Catelyn and Jack. She also is looking forward to having much more flexibility in her schedule. “I care for aging parents back in Wisconsin, and now, I will be able to see them during the week rather than just on the weekend,” says Kaufman. “I plan on doing more traveling and engaging in volunteer work. My parents were committed to volunteerism and that has also been ingrained in me.”

When asked about what she will miss the most, Kaufman says, “The people.”

### **Kaufman’s IHA Journey**

Kaufman started her career as an English teacher in Grafton, Wisconsin. Six months after she and Chuck were married, his job relocated, moving the couple to the Chicago area in November 1974. As a newlywed, Kaufman sought employment through a recruitment firm, planning to look for a teaching position closer to the start of the school season the following year. She was placed as a receptionist in IHA’s office located in Chicago on Jan. 2, 1975, working with a staff of 25.

IHA moved its offices to Oakbrook in May 1975, and Kaufman followed. A year later, she was promoted to Senior Secretary for Government Affairs, and her teaching career officially was put on the back burner. Kaufman found herself in the midst of a transforming organization, which she found very exciting and rewarding.

“IHA opened the Springfield office in 1975. It was a great opportunity to become involved with our state government relations, along with having the opportunity to work in Springfield and assist with our advocacy efforts,” says Kaufman. “I also spent about five years coordinating and planning our participation in the AHA Meeting in Washington, D.C., in which back then about 150 IHA members attended annually.”

In 1979, Kaufman had her first and only child, Cara. While on leave, Kaufman was offered an opportunity to work in the Volunteer Services Department. Balancing motherhood with her career, Kaufman continued a reduced work schedule for 11 years and was the first woman at IHA to work remotely, which was no easy feat sans computers and email.

IHA moved from Oakbrook to its current Naperville location in 1982. Kaufman became the Director of the Volunteer Services Department in 1986. She moved into the Regulatory Affairs and Constituencies Department as a Senior Director in 1994, and four years later became an Assistant Vice President in the department. In 2002, Kaufman became Vice President of Membership and Constituencies, a role former IHA CEO Ken Robbins said suited her perfectly.

“Sue was excellent at keeping tabs on our hospitals and their needs,” said Robbins, “She had a great pulse of the membership and often times gave us advanced warning on issues that needed to be addressed.”

Her understanding of the membership and ability to build consensus with IHA members and staff bolstered Kaufman to the roles of Chief of Staff in 2010 and Chief Operating Officer in 2013.

During her journey at IHA, Kaufman has seen the association grow from 25 staff members to more than 200. She witnessed the formation of the IHA Political Action Committee and Healthcare Associates Credit Union, along with several other constituency groups. Kaufman assisted with the integration of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council and Illinois Hospital Association to form the Illinois Health and Hospital Association in 2016.

Kaufman officially retires on July 17.

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### **About IHA**

The Illinois Health and Hospital Association, with offices in Chicago, Naperville, Springfield, and Washington, D.C., advocates for Illinois' more than 200 hospitals and nearly 50 health systems as they serve their patients and communities. IHA members provide a broad range of services—not just within their walls, but across the continuum of healthcare and in their communities. Reflecting the diversity of the state, IHA members consist of nonprofit, investor-owned and public hospitals in the following categories: community, safety net, rural, critical access, specialty, and teaching hospitals, including academic medical centers. For more information, see [www.team-iha.org](http://www.team-iha.org). Like IHA on [Facebook](#). Follow IHA on [Twitter](#).