

**Karen Jefferson Morrison**  
**President, OhioHealth Foundation**  
**Senior Vice President, OhioHealth**

*Karen Jefferson Morrison is the president of the OhioHealth Foundation and the senior vice president of OhioHealth External Affairs. For the Foundation, she provides executive fundraising leadership to support investments in clinical services, innovation, technology, and community outreach programs. As senior vice president of External Affairs, she is responsible for leading the corporate strategy for government and community relations.*

*OhioHealth is a nationally recognized, not-for-profit, charitable healthcare organization serving and supported by the community. Based in Columbus, Ohio, it is a family of 18 hospitals, 23 health and surgery centers, home-health providers, medical equipment, and health service suppliers throughout a 40-county area.*

*She serves as a member of the boards of trustees for Capital University, the YWCA, and the Center for Healthy Families. In the fall of 2007, she was appointed by Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman to chair the 2012 Bicentennial Commission Health Care Task Force. In February 2008, she was appointed by Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman to serve on the Board of Health for the City of Columbus.*

**Professionally, what is your passion?** Public health, wellness, and prevention. No question about it. I went to Vanderbilt to study biology, chemistry, and science. I actually wanted to get a degree in teaching so I could educate on these issues. Then, I met a doctor and she talked me into entering the college of medicine. So I went on to The Ohio State University College of Medicine and Public Health. It was here that I realized, "This is what I want to be." **What about public health and medicine interests you?** I have a natural curiosity to look at things beyond the surface. Even when the picture is clear, I always find myself wanting to dig deeper; there's always something more to think about and consider. With public policy and medicine, even when the puzzle appears to be complete, there's always an extra piece to factor in. I'm drawn to that. **You're an epidemiologist, a lobbyist, and an attorney.** There's community in all of these things; they connect with each other in the sense that all three aim to help people. The advocacy component connects with the legal component, and they work together to help shape public policy for communities. **Helping and supporting the community is central to you?** It is. All of the roles that I've had prior to my current role have had the word community in the title. At Riverside Hospital, I was the director of community relations. I was then promoted to the vice president of government and community relations. Even today, in my roles as president and senior vice president for the OhioHealth Foundation and for External Affairs, I make sure that I'm involved in community outreach programs. It's what drives me every day. **Who or what helped you along the way?** My mother was trained as a biochemist and is a very intuitive, strong, independent woman. My father is an OB-GYN. They taught me to be quietly assertive. They made me realize that it is important not to follow the leader, but to become the leader. **What leadership styles have you developed on your own?** It's important to be a part of a team, but it is equally important to identify your own style. I always empower my staff to think for themselves. Accountability is very important to me as a leader. Take accountability for your role, your actions, your skills, and your ability to think for yourself. Honesty and truth? Own it. That's what a leader does. In life, I think that there is more fear of risk out there than there is a willingness to take the next step. I encourage myself and my staff to try. **What's next for you?** The path I'm on is my journey. I always like to be in the moment and live the "right now." And, right now, I'm happy with my role, and I'm honored to be a woman in today's world. But, down the road, if I could practice law on the East Coast, I'm not sure I would be sad about that! For now, this is my life and I'm very satisfied with it. **What advice do you have for women professionals starting off in their career?** Be self-reflective; recognize and own your talents. Even if your talents don't fit the mold like those of your peers might, go after your innate skills anyway. Reflect on your weaknesses as well. It's important to grow from them and not allow those to be a roadblock. Do your research, make a commitment to your professional life, and then get out there and network!

