



TANJA OQUENDO

*Chief Administrative Officer/
Chief Human Resources Officer
KentuckyOne Health*

*by Michael L. Jones &
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Tanja Oquendo serves as Senior Vice President, Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Human Resources Officer for KentuckyOne Health, the largest health system in Kentucky. Her journey to this position is built on close family support and a passion for collaborative workplace cultures.

Growing up, her family's strong values guided Oquendo. "There came a point in my childhood when my father said, 'You have to make some decisions about your future. Since you argue so well with your parents, why don't you think about law school?'" Oquendo fondly recalls. "This was not an option I had considered and one which was very different to more creative pursuits that were on my mind."

After earning her bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Michigan, Oquendo took her father's advice and received a Juris Doctorate from Wayne State University Law School. Oquendo's first professional step came as Director of Personnel at a community college in Marietta, OH. Experiencing first-hand the ability to combine sociology and law, the position sparked a passion for building culture and overcoming workplace challenges.

"Human resources serves a strategic function, and I found early in my career that it allows me to utilize many skills I learned in college and law school, such as critical and analytical thinking, seeing all sides of a situation and understanding how people interact," notes Oquendo.

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Diverse professional experiences built Oquendo into an expert in human resources. She wrote a two-part series on the subject for *Insight into Diversity*, one of the leading diversity magazines in the country. She has also presented at several national forums including World Research Group, the Society for Human Resource Management and a conference hosted by the International Quality and Productivity Center.

Oquendo received her first executive job as Vice President at Spectrum Health Hospital Group in Grand Rapids, MI. Her excellence at Spectrum brought Oquendo rapid progression, moving from Manager to Vice President in a few years, along with recognition as "One of Michigan's Most Powerful Women" by Inforum, a professional women's alliance. After nine years with Spectrum she moved to Towson, MD, becoming Vice President of Human Resources at St. Joseph Medical Center, a Catholic Health Initiatives facility.

In 2012, Oquendo brought her experience to Louisville, KY and KentuckyOne Health. Bringing together more than 12,000 employees across 200 facilities and shared legacies from Jewish, Catholic and academic care traditions, KentuckyOne Health is a unique and innovative health organization. "It is an honor for me to help build a unified culture within KentuckyOne Health," notes Oquendo. "We are creating a culture focused on quality care, collaboration and improving health and wellness in communities across the Commonwealth."

Oquendo is active with a number of public service organizations including The Links, Incorporated and the International Women's Forum. She serves on the boards of Fund for the Arts, the Jefferson County Public Schools Foundation and University of Kentucky's MHA Board of Advisors.

Oquendo acknowledges that her ability to focus on professional and community endeavors is helped by the flexible schedule of her husband of 16 years, graphic designer and artist, John Oquendo. "Building a work-life balance takes time and energy," states Oquendo. "Work, family and time alone are all important to me. I am lucky that my husband John, my rock, makes it easier for me than some people have it." The couple has two children - Isabella 13, and Julian 14, with whom Oquendo spends most of her free time at their home in Goshen, KY. "I love spending time with my family," she says. "I love watching old episodes of 'Colombo' or Agatha Christie movies, and I love to cook. When you are as busy as I am, you appreciate the simple pleasures."

