

Compliance Today – October 2022



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Meet Kelly Willenberg: The sky is the limit

By Kelly Willenberg DBA, RN, CCRP, CHRC, CHC and Debbie Troklus CHC-F, CCEP-F, CHRC, CHPC, CCEP-I

DT: What's the most interesting thing about you that we wouldn't learn from your resume alone?

KW: I am a mother of adult fraternal twin daughters, and I have served as a Multiples of America (MOA) volunteer for over 30 years. I was president of MOA from 1999–2001. My daughters are my greatest accomplishment. Watching them as grown individuals is truly amazing. Now that I have six grandchildren, I see my husband's and my legacy daily. It's a personal fulfillment.

DTL What is your background?

KW: I have a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's and doctorate in business. I have worked in clinical research since 1985. I played high school basketball and was part of a ballet troupe as a teen, so being a part of a team has been a part of my life since I was a young child. Strong teamwork in compliance is necessary, and I am thankful for my experience in all types of teams in my life.

DT: What did you want to be when you grew up?

KW: I wanted to be a nurse from a young age. I was the first child in my extended family on both sides to attend college. During nursing school, I thought about quitting to train to be a kidney dialysis technician. I worked the night shift in the dialysis unit, setting up kidney dialysis machines for the patients each morning. When I approached my father, he told me that he wanted me to finish nursing school and then decide if I wanted to work in that area. I finished undergrad in four years and immediately became a nurse in pediatrics. I never worked in dialysis during my nursing career, so looking back now, he was right, and I am glad I did not quit nursing school.

DT: If you characterized yourself in three words, what would they be?

KW: My three traits are being driven, organized, and courageous. Being driven can be a negative, too, as I am always working at all times of the day. Since my husband died unexpectedly five years ago, I find myself having to pace my workaholic attitude. When I started my company 13 years ago, I thought of myself as courageous. Now I know that starting my own business was a risk, and the commitment is huge. I have discovered compliance in all aspects of my life, including serving on various boards over the years.

DT: What job did you hold outside of compliance, and how did it help prepare you for the compliance field?

KW: That's an interesting question. I was a weekend disc jockey in college for a large FM/AM radio station while in nursing school. I had to educate myself on the Federal Communications Commission rules, generate enthusiasm with the listeners, and know the music industry, which was all new to me. I began to be requested to

do commercial ads, and I also taught myself about marketing. I see my few years in radio as prep for compliance as there were regulations that I had to learn and understand quickly, with little training. As part of the traveling radio DJ show for weddings and events, I was part of the group that generated excitement. As a faculty member of the academies and board of director member of SCCE & HCCA, I see myself as someone who can generate excitement for our profession. The research compliance field is rapidly changing, and I see myself as a cheerleader for our profession.

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