

# Vision behind the numbers

## CHRIS WRIGHT

President and CEO, iCare Health Network

Where some see coincidence in the crucial events of one's life, 62-year-old Chris Wright sees the divine.

A believer in God and hard work, Wright remembers being a young CPA watching from his window as an office building was built from the ground up. The business inside — the Brian Center Corp. — eventually hired him as a financial analyst for its skilled nursing operations. Wright found his calling and realized something else.

"There are people behind the numbers," he says.

Wright, now president and CEO of Connecticut-based iCare Health Network, grew up in Vale, NC. The rural, unincorporated town sits about 20 minutes south of Hickory and was just 15 minutes away from Robin, the high school sweetheart, who later became his wife.

Wright and his older sister were raised in a one-bathroom farmhouse built by his great-great grandfather in 1891. They attended church every Sunday and knew that anything they had was hard-earned. His mother, Nancy, operated a day care in their home for 40 years and his father, Hatley, worked in retail and warehouse roles. Wright paid for college working full-time at a pharmacy and later selling Wrangler jeans in a retail store.

His humble upbringing, "made me who I am," Wright says. "A lot of my childhood was really enriched in, and focused on, my parents instilling good moral values."

Those values were evident to Rob Salazar, Wright's business partner and longtime friend.

"He always struck me from the beginning as an honest and decent human being," Salazar

says of Wright.

Their friendship started at a 1991 finance conference in Orlando, FL, where Salazar, then with Solomon Health Care Consulting, was speaking. Wright was impressed with what he heard.

Leaving the conference for home, he and Salazar ended up on the same shuttle. The two kept in touch and Wright went to work for Salazar in 1995, moving his family from the only home they had ever known in North Carolina to Denver.

"I had to twist his arm, to be quite honest," Salazar says. At the time, Wright's son was 4 and his daughter was 7.

"It was not an easy move," Wright says, describing it as emotionally wrought. "I just felt it was the right thing for us to do, for me and my wife," he said. "God bless her."

Ultimately, it all worked out as if by design. He and Robin now live in Connecticut and recently celebrated their 40th anniversary. On their wall is a picture of two champagne flutes and the text "Celebrate everything," a motto they live by, Wright says.

The pair bought the farmhouse he grew up in, renovated it, and plan to retire in North Carolina. They've even picked a church there that they tune into online or attend when visiting.

Wright works with his son Caleb, iCare's director of information technology, and he credits his daughter, Bethany, for helping come up with the iCare name. Combined, his children have made him a grandfather of six, with a seventh on the way.

"People ask me what my hobbies are now," Wright said. "My hobbies are my grandkids."

— KIMBERLY HARTLEY

## RESUME

- 1984 Earns bachelor's degree from Lenoir-Rhyne College
- 1984-1987 Works for CPA firm McGladrey Hendrickson & Pullen as an auditor; earns CPA license
- 1987-1994 Serves as budget director, financial analyst and VP of budgeting and planning at Brian Center Corp., budgeting for 50 Southeast SNFs
- 1995 Becomes interim CFO for startup and skilled nursing consultant Vantage Patient Care Systems
- 1995-2001 Joins Solomon Health Care Consulting as president and CEO
- 2001-present Starts, owns and operates iCare Health Network, with facilities catering to residents with behavioral health, substance use and other complex needs
- 2023 Elected vice chairman of AHCA's board of directors