

Determination, Hard Work, and the Right Values:

By Catherine McCorkle

There is no magic formula for success, according to David O. Volpi, MD, HU '82. Dr. Volpi has enjoyed remarkable success in several fields, as an otolaryngologist and an entrepreneur. He attributes these accomplishments to determination, hard work, and the right values – values that he learned from his parents, Orlando and Jean Volpi.

"I love what I do," Volpi says. As an ear, nose and throat doctor, he sees a wide range of patients, from young children to the elderly, for medical care. Recently, he treated a 24-year-old patient with a chronic sinus problem; Volpi remembers putting ear tubes in the young man when he was 2. Volpi also performs many different types of surgery. "If you like doing surgery, [ENT] is a thrilling thing," he observes. Other aspects of his professional life bring a similar challenge and satisfaction.

"I love medicine. I love surgery. But I enjoy business also," Volpi says. He has always been an entrepreneur, creating and selling several successful businesses while maintaining his practice. His most recent venture is as the founder of eOs Sleep®, a network of specialized otolaryngologists and dentists who treat snoring and sleep apnea. The group now has 22 offices across the country.

While not all of Volpi's businesses have been in medicine, this one allows him to marry his two interests. "I work hard. I work a lot," he says. "But I enjoy doing this kind of stuff!"

Time management is essential as Volpi juggles his multiple roles and responsibilities. He explains, "When I'm practicing, I'm practicing. When I'm doing surgery, I'm doing surgery. And when I'm running the business, I'm running the business. It's like anything else — you've got to manage your time properly." In addition to time management, Volpi also identifies assembling the right team as a vital component of his success.

The first person he credits is his wife of 26 years,

Deborah, a pediatric dentist. "To have somebody go through life with me, and support all these crazy ideas I come up with, and allow me the latitude to pursue them is important. I wouldn't be able to do it without her."

Volpi himself is a vital team member of the College of Medicine's alumni network. In recent years, he has become very involved with the school, including serving as a member of the Alumni Board. He credits Drexel University for breathing new life into his alma mater and getting him "re-energized" about the school. "[Hahnemann] really is what it used to be, just with a different name," he says. Volpi's son, Alexander, is in his second year at the College of Medicine, making his father "even more invested" in the school, as well as bringing him to campus more frequently.

Volpi is proud and appreciative of his family. He is also deeply indebted to his parents. "I feel like I owe everything to them," he says. As testament to this, Volpi has created a need-based scholarship in their honor. "All the good things I learned, I learned from my parents. [The Orlando and Jean Volpi Scholarship] is a way to honor them in perpetuity."

From an early age, Volpi knew he wanted to be a doctor. When he was around 5 years old, his younger sister became very sick. There was only one doctor in their small town of Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania, and he became a regular presence in the family home. In Volpi's eyes, "this guy came to our house and made my sister feel better. I thought that it would be pretty cool to be able to do that." Being a physician and helping people was the "only thing I thought I would ever do," he says.

Despite his determination, it was not certain that Volpi would become a doctor. In his world, "kids from small towns went to work in the steel mill," he explains. "That's what they did. College wasn't even something that was discussed." Volpi knew, however, that he wanted something different. "I just kept plowing ahead," he says.

After earning his undergraduate degree from Penn

State, he was accepted into medical school at Hahnemann University. The day of his acceptance remains a vivid memory for Volpi. "When I got in to medical school, my Dad couldn't have been prouder. It was a shining moment in his life. It was for me, too."

Volpi has fond memories of his time at Hahnemann. He recalls the hospital as a dynamic place, a "cutting-edge institution." He began his residency in general surgery at the Medical College of Pennsylvania, with the eventual goal of becoming a cardiac surgeon. But Dr. David Wagner, a pediatric surgeon at MCP [who was soon to become chair of emergency medicine], encouraged him to take some time, work as an ER doctor, and decide on his specialty from there. That's when Volpi became interested in otolaryngology. He


went on to a residency in otolaryngology-head and neck surgery and has had his own practice in New York City for more than 20 years.

For Volpi, whatever he has accomplished harkens back to the example he learned from his parents as a child in Belle Vernon, an ethic he also wants to pass along to his own children. "It's all about hard work," he says.

"I started from this little town in Western Pennsylvania with parents that maybe made \$12,000 to \$13,000 a year in a house with four kids," Volpi observes. "I feel like with determination, hard work, and the right values, I was able to achieve a tremendous amount in this world. You very rarely get something if you're not willing to put the time and effort in."

David O. Volpi, MD, HU '82

Savaria Photography



David Volpi cloaked his son, Alexander, at the 2012 White Coat Ceremony. "The day he got in to medical school was almost as emotional as the day I got in," Volpi says.