

## President-Elect Candidate: Dr. Kraft equally at ease with primary care, teaching, global health, finance

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Shortly after becoming the first pediatric program director at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, Colleen A. Kraft, M.D., FAAP, gave her residents an unusual assignment.

She asked them to take the poverty challenge, an initiative in which participants must live on just a few dollars a day and forgo other comforts. She forbade them from using their cars, forcing them to rely on public transportation as they juggled groceries, errands and appointments.

Dr. Kraft wanted her residents to understand the difficulties lower-income families in their community may face.

Known for her enthusiasm and energy, Colleen A. Kraft, M.D., FAAP, takes a trip each year with her adult children (from left: Tim, Julie and Daniel Kraft), a tradition she started in their childhoods. Dr. Kraft and husband Larry Rosser, D.Min., (inset) also travel when schedules permit. She is associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati and medical director of an accountable care organization.

“They learned the challenges of how to go from point A to B,” she said. “It helped them better understand why some of their patients were late.”

Dr. Kraft also required her residents to work with home visitors and Head Start programs, so they would see the difference that early intervention and community support can make in a child’s life.



After all, it’s a lesson she learned long before becoming a pediatrician.

### **Making a difference — from the start**

In 1965, Dr. Kraft was a member of the inaugural Head Start class. The federally funded initiative promotes school readiness for children under 5 from low-income families through education, health, social and other services. It was only a summer program, but one of the teachers told her she was so smart, she might even become a doctor someday.

The teacher’s words proved prophetic. Dr. Kraft graduated from the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine in 1986 and built an impressive medical career that has included being a primary care

provider, managing a practice, creating a residency program and working at an academic center focusing on health care finance.

"I don't know anyone who's a stronger advocate for children or pediatricians than Colleen Kraft," said Francis E. Rushton Jr., M.D., FAAP, a former AAP board member. "If you look back at her career, it talks about persistence and a track record of success. She's an expert at coming at the same issues from different angles."

More than 50 years after that Head Start teacher suggested she was smart enough to be a doctor, she is a nominee for AAP president. After running unsuccessfully for the post in 2008, her platform remains much the same.

"My goal is to empower pediatricians on behalf of kids," Dr. Kraft said. "We need to put focus on how our pediatricians in the community focus on the priorities of the AAP. I want to take some of the things we know — such as our work in early brain development — and get them implemented and spread throughout the community."

Her passion for the issue is reflected in her work on the advisory board for the AAP-operated Head Start National Center on Health, which provides the early intervention program with education, training and technical assistance on children's health issues. Dr. Kraft has served as chair for the past two years.

The position has given her an opportunity to collaborate with Head Start health managers, nurses, teachers, dietitians and others who work on the front lines. Through them, she has seen what it takes — and what more is needed — to provide services to nearly 1 million children each year.

"I really get to see what they do each and every day," she said. "It's very inspiring and I never give up an opportunity to speak to them."

### **Wide-ranging involvements**

In addition to her work with the National Center, Dr. Kraft serves on the AAP Task Force on Pediatric Practice Change and the National Medical Home Initiative Project Advisory Committee. She also was AAP Virginia Chapter president from 2006-'08 and was best known for working with the state Legislature to improve Medicaid payment rates for pediatric services.

Dr. Kraft's international child health experience includes volunteering abroad, developing a global health rotation and curriculum, and mentoring medical students engaged in global health research.

"She has a strong global health presence. She attends meetings and has done work all over the world to help children, even though some of that work has proved to be quite dangerous," Dr. Rushton said. "She's energetic and enthusiastic, but she's also a clear thinker and a big picture person."

An associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati School of Medicine, Dr. Kraft also is medical director for the Health Network by Cincinnati Children's (HNCC), an innovation lab for alternative payment models with Medicaid managed care. The HNCC provides data and incentives to the community-based network of providers in the greater Cincinnati area, helping practices understand risk stratification and proactive care management for their population of pediatric patients.

Prior to moving to Cincinnati, Dr. Kraft was a primary care pediatrician in private practice in Richmond, Va., and the founding pediatric program director at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

“I can relate to anyone in any one of these settings,” she said. “I have relationships with different areas because I lived that.”

### **Broad experiences**

Indeed, her colleagues say her diverse resume makes her an important voice on myriad topics. As a member of the AAP Early Brain and Child Development Leadership Workgroup, she can speak authoritatively on the impact of social determinants of health on child health and development. And as medical director of an accountable care organization, she is fluent in the language of the Affordable Care Act and the metrics of practice transformation.

“But most importantly, she has been a primary care pediatrician, so she understands the desire of pediatricians to do right by their patients and families despite distractions like meaningful use criteria, insurance hassles and financial constraints,” said AAP Ohio Chapter President Andrew S. Garner, M.D., Ph.D., FAAP.

In her spare time, she and her husband enjoy traveling and listening to music. She takes a trip each year with her three adult children, a tradition dating to their childhoods.

Some of those trips have been more eventful than others. In 2001, she and her children were riding in a van in South Africa when they came under attack by hijackers. The children weren’t injured, but their driver was shot twice. Dr. Kraft made a tourniquet with the man’s T-shirt. The driver survived and her family learned a valuable lesson, not unlike the one she tried to instill in her residents at Virginia Tech.

“My children understand firsthand how dangerous the world can be,” Dr. Kraft said. “But they also know that they must be a part of it.”

*Dr. Kraft is running against Michael T. Brady, M.D., FAAP, of Columbus, Ohio in the election that runs from Oct. 21 through Nov. 21. For a profile of Dr. Brady visit <http://www.aappublications.org/news/2016/06/22/BradyProfile062216>.*