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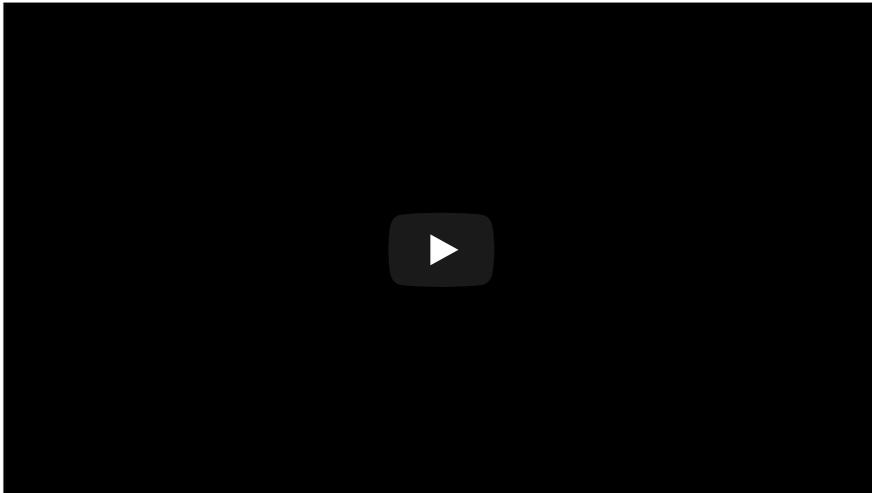
‘The children sent me’: Motto drives Dr. Goza’s career locally, nationally

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Wynn St. Clair, Correspondent

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When the uncle of Sara “Sally” Goza, M.D., FAAP, started his medical practice, he created five rules to guide how his office would be run.

1. Take care of folks.
2. Don’t be stupid.
3. Don’t be greedy.
4. Listen to patients.
5. Love one another.

Dr. Goza now owns the practice and still draws inspiration from her uncle’s example. She believes her uncle’s commandments are timeless, each one a reminder to put the patient’s needs above all else.

“It is very important for us to have that culture in the practice. Now when we look to hire people, even for the office, we look for people who share those same values: to nurture

and to serve,” Dr. Goza said. “If your priority is the patients, the profits will follow so you can continue to care for kids and families.”

To be sure, those five rules have helped define Dr. Goza’s career over the past three decades. A general pediatrician who has been heavily involved in the AAP, Dr. Goza recently was nominated as a candidate for AAP president-elect.

Hard work, action

Colleagues say the position — which will be decided during the fall election — is perfectly suited for Dr. Goza’s indefatigable nature and consensus-building abilities.

“Her track record has shown she’s all about hard work and taking action,” said Avril Beckford, M.D., FAAP, former president of the AAP Georgia Chapter. “Sally is a person whose actions speak even louder than their words. When it comes to action, the time, energy and devotion she gives to children and families is very inspiring. The AAP is her life.”

Dr. Goza, who grew up amid a large, extended family in Fayetteville, decided to become a doctor in high school. After graduating from Rhodes College with a degree in biology, she attended the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. She completed her internship and residency at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and Medical Center, where she served as house staff association president. After finishing her training in 1987, she returned to Fayetteville, a medium-sized Atlanta suburb.

Dr. Goza was a partner in a multispecialty clinic before joining as an employee in a large hospital system. About four years ago, the primary care doctors from her original practice decided to leave the system and go back out on their own. Together they formed First Georgia Physicians Group in 2015.

It wasn’t an easy endeavor, but Dr. Goza believes it was the right one. And she hopes her decision will encourage other pediatricians to make bold moves in their own careers.

“That was a big step, a big leap of faith. We had to reinvent ourselves, but we did it and it has been great. We all have seasons in life, and we have to be brave enough to know what’s right and make those changes,” she said. “I want to inspire people. I want them to know they don’t have to stay stuck in something that isn’t fulfilling anymore.”

Wide-ranging service

In addition to a career dedicated to private practice, Dr. Goza has been involved in the Academy. She has worked with the Georgia Chapter for more than 20 years, including serving on the board of directors, Medicaid task force and as chapter president. She currently is on the legislative committee, the fall planning group and the board of the Pediatric Foundation of Georgia.

On the national level, she has been a member of the National Nominating Committee and District X chair, representing Georgia, Alabama, Florida and Puerto Rico.

She was selected by her colleagues as the first at-large representative to the executive committee and is chair of the For Our Future Campaign Steering Committee, which led

fundraising efforts for the new AAP headquarters.

One of her toughest moments on the board was in 2017, when Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico and Hurricane Irma landed in Florida. She worked with the Academy to help ensure pediatricians in both places were getting the resources they needed.

"She's willing to tackle everything that comes at her. She's the first person to raise her hand when they're looking for volunteers to do something," said AAP Past President Benard P. Dreyer, M.D., FAAP (2015-'16). "She's caring, she's smart, she's collaborative and she's always a voice for common sense. She understands complex issues, but she also has a real-world response as to what should be done to address those issues."

If elected, Dr. Goza hopes to bolster diversity among the Academy's membership. She also wants to continue to be a strong, unwavering voice for children in turbulent times, while still maintaining a seat at the table where critical decisions are made. In today's political climate, it's a job that requires both relentlessness and diplomacy.

She draws her inspiration from buttons she has seen at the AAP Washington, D.C., office. The buttons, she said, have a simple message that encompasses the Academy's mission: *The children sent me.*

"That's exactly how I feel each and every day," Dr. Goza said. "There is so much to be done. It takes a lot out of you to do it, to constantly be fighting for what's right for kids. I have to do more. I have to do something more for kids because they have no voice if it's not for us. We have to be their voice."

Love of travel, hospitality

In her free time, Dr. Goza enjoys traveling, especially to California wine country. She is a wine collector but doesn't care to drink much herself. Instead, she shares her favorite bottles with friends and family.

She likes to cook and entertain, as well, particularly in her childhood home, which she purchased after her mother died. In homage to her family's deep roots in Fayetteville, the house is located along Goza Road and along the shores of Goza Lake.

She also has started a tradition at her practice. On Fridays, the entire staff wears T-shirts with her uncle's five rules printed on them.

"You have to remember why you went into it, but you also need to be able to make a living," Dr. Goza said. "It's a simple way to remind us what medicine was always meant to be."

Read about AAP president-elect candidate George C. Phillips, M.D., M.B.A., FAAP, at <http://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/07/31/georgephillips073118>.