

## Distinguished Health Professions Alumna

### Paula Woolworth, OT'79

Retired Senior Vice President

GAB Robins and MedInsights



**Paula Woolworth** is a doer. With the bachelor's degree in occupational therapy (OT) she earned in 1979 from the University of Kansas, where she also earned varsity letters in both volleyball and softball, Woolworth forged a diverse career.

As a staff OT at Bethany Rehabilitation and Medical Center, she was promoted to program manager and assistant director of occupational therapy within five years. She then parlayed her background in resource management in OT into a career in patient case management at two insurance companies.

Her next stop was at Mid-American Rehabilitation hospital in Overland Park, Kansas, where she served on the executive team that opened the facility. She developed policies for all allied health departments, achieved Medicare and CARF accreditation, and implemented board oversight processes. Woolworth described her time there as “exhaustive, exhilarating and educational.”

Woolworth spent 15 years managing all U.S. workers' compensation claims at Levi Strauss & Co. While there, she convinced corporate and union leaders to establish on-site occupational therapy and physical therapy clinics, which enabled therapists to witness and understand the physical demands of a patient's job.

Woolworth next joined GAB Robins, where she was a senior vice president and was responsible for the company's managed care subsidiary, MedInsights. Since retiring in 2011, Woolworth has devoted herself to service. She served three elected terms as mayor pro tem in the Dallas suburb of Shady Shores, was a board vice president for a preschool and built houses with Habitat for Humanity. Recently, Woolworth joined the Community Outreach & Wellness Committee for the Cristus St. Vincent hospital board in Santa Fe.

She has been especially supportive of her alma mater. In 2014, she was named to KU Endowment's Chancellor's Club Advisory Committee. In 2017, she became one of the inaugural members of the KU School of Health Professions Board of Advocates and was appointed its first secretary. She has been instrumental in organizing alumni efforts, not only for Occupational Therapy Education, but for the entire School of Health Professions.

She married Deborah Leliaert in a tiny vineyard in Sonoma, California, in 2008. She says the first most important person in her life was her mother, who raised five children after Woolworth's father was killed in a work-related car accident when she was an infant: “We were a close family of five kids with a single parent. My mom was determined I would go to college, and I was unequivocally supported in that goal.”

For all her achievements, the KU Health Professions Alumni Association is proud to present the Distinguished Health Professions Alumna Award to Paula Woolworth, OT'79.