



Marcella Choate **Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City**

She was recently divorced and raising two children in Nebraska when the accident left her quadriplegic, capable of little more than shoulder shrugs. But she wanted to get out of institutional care and go home to her kids. That was the setting for Marcella Choate's introduction to rehabilitative care. Choate worked with another nurse to get that woman into an apartment where, with in-home care, she was able to raise those children to adulthood. In any rehab professional's book, that's a win. "She taught me so much about what she needed," Choate says. "The patient taught the nurse; it was kind of a two-way street. She also taught me that there are a lot of things in the way of people with disabilities."

Choate's career eventually brought her to the Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City, where's she's been involved in nursing and administrative roles for 35 years. There, says president and CEO Don Harkins, Choate has demonstrated the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job. Both qualities are in demand there. The institute specializes in treating some of the most difficult medical cases in the region. Every year, Choate is responsible for managing the admissions of more than 2,000 patients who have experienced stroke, brain or spinal-cord injuries, neurological maladies and other conditions.

Often, they present not just issues of medical treatment and care. The damage also may be psychological, social, work-related, familial and even financial. Successful treatment, Choate says, rests on two primary factors: a nurturing, supportive family, and education that cuts across all levels: "What I found important in rehabilitation was with the education of the individual, making rounds with the doctor to understand where the doctor was coming from, and communicating with family," Choate said. "Constant communication between nurse, staff, physician and family is very helpful to a successful outcome."