



PAUL J. DIAZ (L'88)

BY ANNE CASSIDY

"I can't imagine doing my job without what I learned at Georgetown Law," says Paul Diaz (L'88), president and chief executive officer of Kindred, a Fortune 500 health services company that operates hospitals, nursing and rehabilitation centers and is one of the largest providers of long-term health care services in the country.

"We just announced a private letter ruling, where we're spinning off one of our operating divisions and merging it with a similar spin-off of another public company. Much smarter people came up with this creative structure," Diaz says, but his Law Center class on corporate tax and securities law "enabled me to sit in on meetings and not be completely lost."

Whether it's "litigation or taxes or helping our operators balance compliance issues with operational challenges," Diaz says he continues to draw on what he learned at Georgetown Law. Certain classes and teachers stick in his mind, especially Professors Martin Ginsburg, Peter Edelman and Steven Goldberg. "I loved those guys," he says.

Diaz learned something else important at the Law Center, something that wasn't in the curriculum — he learned to multi-task. "I worked my way through law school. The first year I worked part-time and the next two years I clerked at Ginsberg, Feldman and Bress, a D.C. firm. I wasn't in the night program but I arranged my classes so I could get into the office maybe 30 hours a week," Diaz says. "I'm sure my grades suffered a little bit from it, but the school was incredibly helpful and supportive from a financial aid perspective."

It's this accommodation and support that Diaz is perpetuating for others by serving on the Law Center's Board of Visitors and funding the Paul J. Diaz Scholarship Fund, which assists students with financial needs and strives to promote ethnic diversity. "I've been incredibly blessed and I try to remind myself every day that I've been the beneficiary of a lot of people's assistance," Diaz says. "I'm trying to help students who may not have had such breaks along the way."

Diaz worked hard to make his own "breaks." He did several years of public

accounting for Arthur Andersen after receiving a B.A. in finance and accounting from American University in 1983, and entered the Law Center "with a fair amount of real estate and finance experience" that made it possible to do "more than just legal research" while earning his J.D.

After a summer associate position in the Big Apple, "I decided that the New York big firm thing wasn't for me," and in 1989, he found his way to a start-up company named Allegis Health Services, becoming its general counsel and chief financial officer and beginning the journey that would eventually bring him to his current position. After selling Allegis in 1996 to Mariner Health Group, Diaz took various executive positions with Mariner, where he eventually became executive vice president and chief operating officer. Diaz has been with Kindred for five years, the last three as president and CEO.

Diaz learned that he liked the health care industry and he's carefully watching the "interesting things" that the Law Center is doing in health care law. "The whole intersection between law and public health is an interest of mine," Diaz says. "My wife says only a geek would think about something like that as a hobby." But as the CEO of a diverse health care company with 80 long-term care hospitals, 253 nursing and rehabilitation centers, 40 pharmacies and much more, his interest is far more than a hobby.

As for his other pastimes, Diaz spends any extra hours he has with his wife, Viki, and their three children ages 8, 6 and 2 ("they're the lights of my life," Diaz says). "We have two family things that we like to do: We love to ski and we also have a house in Dewey Beach.... I play a lot of beach volleyball there, but it's getting a lot harder on my knees!"

Diaz grew up in Florida but spent most of his adult life in the D.C. area, and his wife is a Maryland native. So it was a big change when the family moved from Bethesda, Maryland, to Louisville, Kentucky, for Diaz to take the Kindred position. But the family has come to love their new home. "There's such a high quality of life here," Diaz says.