

AMY REYNDERS, MD '01

Playing the Long Game

As an ENT surgeon and Upstate Medical Alumni Foundation Board member, Amy Reynders, MD '01, focuses on continuity — caring for patients across their lifetime while helping shape the future of medical education.

Amy Reynders, MD '01, has built her career on relationships—relationships with patients, colleagues, and the institution that helped shape her path in medicine. As a partner with Syracuse ENT Surgeons in DeWitt, New York, and a longtime member of the Upstate Medical Alumni Foundation Board, Reynders has remained deeply connected to Upstate Medical University, giving back to the place she credits with launching her career and reinforcing the values that guide her work today.

Reynders grew up in Rochester, New York, and attended Rutgers University, where she was recruited to play Division I basketball. She also majored in biological sciences, with a plan to pursue medical school. She chose Upstate because of its proximity to family and the connection she felt to the region. That sense of community ultimately played a defining role in her professional journey.

As a medical student, Reynders recalls sitting in lecture and watching the clock as mid-day approached, waiting for just the right moment to slip out.

"I'd be like, 'Okay, when is someone going to leave first?'" she says. It wasn't that she wasn't interested in the topic at hand, only that she wanted to secure a spot in the daily pick-up basketball games at the Campus Activities Building.

During clinical rotations, Reynders discovered her calling in otolaryngology. Initially torn between internal medicine and surgery, she found inspiration in the ENT residents and faculty she encountered.

"They all just seemed to be very nice and normal people that enjoyed what they were doing," she says. "As I got into it, I was drawn to the combination of procedural, surgical, and medical care," she says.

Reynders completed a five-year residency at Upstate, one of the only female ENT residents during her tenure. After finishing, she stayed local, joining Syracuse ENT Surgeons in 2006 to partner with colleagues she had trained alongside. Nearly two decades later, she remains with the same practice, a testament to the professional satisfaction she has found in both the specialty and her colleagues.

As a general ENT physician, Reynders treats patients across all stages of life, an aspect of the specialty she finds especially rewarding.



Amy Reynders, MD '01, second row, fourth from left, enjoys spending time with her extended family in Central New York.

"You take care of the child that comes in at nine months old and then they have siblings," she says. "There is that continuity where you take care of several family members as time goes on. Yesterday I saw a patient who was 101."

Her long-standing relationships with physicians trained at Upstate also remain an important part of her practice. "I feel I've been very blessed. You can always pick up the phone," she says, describing the collaborative network she continues to rely on when coordinating patient care.

That deep appreciation for her training inspired Reynders to join the Upstate Medical Foundation Board a decade ago. Recruited by alumni leadership after she became more established in her practice, she viewed the opportunity as a meaningful way to give back.

Through scholarships, ceremonial traditions, and student support initiatives, the Medical Alumni Foundation helps maintain what Reynders views as the heart of Upstate's mission. She believes alumni involvement ensures the institution preserves its core values while evolving to meet modern challenges. "There are many board members who have been involved a long time because they're so committed to Upstate and its students," she says. "That says a lot about the institution."

Outside of medicine and philanthropy, Reynders prioritizes family and personal wellness. One of six siblings, she remains closely connected with her extended family in the Syracuse area. A former triathlete who has completed Ironman competitions, she now prefers cycling, gardening, and baking—activities that reflect her evolving approach to balance.

Looking back, she sees a common thread running through her experiences, from CAB basketball games to operating rooms to board meetings: the importance of community.

"At the end of the day," she says, "that's kind of what we all want—to be doing what we enjoy and be surrounded by people that make it nice to come to work each day."

—Renée Gearhart Levy

If you are interested in learning more about the Medical Alumni Foundation Board, please contact Paul Norcross, executive director, at norcrospp@upstate.edu.