

# “In *the trenches*” of reforming American health care



**B**eth Haenke Just '78 is at the forefront of American health care's quest for efficiency in electronic records-keeping.

She's a national board member of the American Health Information Management Association, for whom she has contributed to workgroups, chaired practice councils and has authored numerous published articles. A resident of Centennial, CO, she was recognized as the Colorado Health Information Management Association's

“Distinguished Member” early in her career. Her company, Just Associates, is a leader in health information interoperability, the practice of integrating data systems within and among healthcare organizations such as hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes.

Not bad for a self-described “farm girl from the Iron Range” who arrived at St. Scholastica thinking she would like to be a veterinarian.

By the end of freshman year she realized that animal doctoring wasn't for her. She liked science and math, but became an undeclared major.

“Then Shirley Eichenwald (Maki) and her Health Information Management team found me,” she says with a chuckle. “They came to me and told me about the field, figuring I might be interested, and they were right.”

Eichenwald Maki, an assistant professor of Health Informatics and Information Management, left a deep impression.

“She's a very mentoring, encouraging kind of person,” Just says. “She has that way about her, she sort of peeks inside of you, especially when you're young like that, and sees potential that you don't even know is there.”

By the mid-1980s Just was consulting as a sub-contractor under another St. Scholastica alum, Monica Pappas DeVitt '67. Just designed software applications in product management and worked in sales support capacities for several software companies, including one she and her husband formed in the early 1990s. Eventually she took a career break to have children with her husband Jerry.

“In coming back to my career I realized I didn't want to work for a big company again, having them fly me all over the place at their schedule rather than my own schedule.”

In 2002, Just Associates was born. Beth is CEO and president; Jerry is VP for marketing. Today the company has 50 employees and is thriving despite the economic slowdown.

“We're right in the trenches on interoperability,” she says, “so we do a lot of consulting work on strategic planning for how organizations should connect up. We do a lot of assessments where, if they've got 50 or 60 systems that are all talking to each other, we analyze the effectiveness of their interoperability. We go in and peel the onion back several layers to look at the actual quality of the messages and data.”

Just says her health information management training helps her tremendously.

“What my company does is all the techie stuff from a non-techie perspective, because we actually understand the data and how it's used in health care – not the engineer's view, but the user's view. I bring the HIM perspective to this field.”

She laughs, and adds: “It's fun. People think I've lost my mind, but I love it.”

## Giving back - efficiently

Beth Haenke Just has created a nationally successful company by making efficient use of ‘IT’ or information technology.

It should come as no surprise, then, that she makes supporting St. Scholastica as efficient as possible.

“I've been giving to the Sister Loretta Sheehan Scholarship and to the Tower Fund for a long time,” she says. “I realized there had to be an easier way.”

She turned to online giving.

“I just have it taken as a charge to my credit card each month, so I'm more consistent in my giving,” she says. “If I had to think about it, then write a check and put it in an envelope and get a stamp – well, it might not get done. Giving online is also better from a cash flow standpoint (because) I don't have to do a lump sum.

“It's been really helpful. I do everything online now, I pay all my bills that way. It made it a lot easier.”

She also appreciates the security.

“Actually, it's safer than using paper,” she says. “Fraud alert systems have gotten so sophisticated now, there are so many methodologies to protect us.”

Just is a loyal supporter of the College, even serving as chair of the Sister Loretta Scholarship Committee this year, because she considers it “giving back.”

“I would never have gotten a degree if it hadn't been for the scholarships I got from St. Scholastica. My parents had seven kids and every single one of us went to college. The only way we went was through scholarships and grants and work study. This is giving back – absolutely.”