



# Be the Best That You Can Be

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Adventist Health Castle, President

“Some may look at the Baldrige program and words like “process,” “systematic,” and “framework” and interpret the Baldrige journey as being rather cool and mechanical. However, it helped us put an intangible purpose into words. Through that journey we were able to increase the tactility of our highest ideal—Love Matters.”

This is a story of openness to learning new ways and being tenacious about seeking excellence. I love the notion of being the best that you can be.

One of the things that attracted me to Adventist Health Castle, in June of 2000, was their approach to quality. They were on the cutting edge of health care for that time and had some pretty good results. Only a week or two into my role as vice president of patient care services, the hospital quality data manager asked if I knew about the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and if I would support using the Baldrige criteria to apply for the Hawaii Award of Excellence through the State Program. Our hospital president at the time was Bob Walker, a wonderful man, who let us run ahead with good ideas.

At the onset of Castle’s Baldrige journey, we thought we were pretty terrific—I didn’t have a clue what we were getting into. The whole process of writing the application shines a light on all the gaps that you have in your organization’s strategy, leadership and governance models, operations, workforce support, and customer experience. One of the helpful things about Baldrige is that it enables you to identify opportunities for improvement.

In 2003 Castle submitted its first application, the examiners visited our hospital, and we were awarded the equivalent of a bronze. Through this application process we realized there was a tremendous opportunity to improve. We were not the best we could be, yet.

Then began the journey to address those opportunities. Our second award application, submitted a few years later, came in at the next level up. It was at this point that we realized, although we could see our ultimate goal, we needed assistance to reach it.

This is not an easy journey and sometimes the feedback is uncomfortable; you must be open to constructive criticism. Over the years, our incorporation of the Baldrige Excellence Framework and our partnerships with Navigant Consulting and Studer Group guided us to develop a systematic approach to process improvement across the board. Thoroughly examining our core competencies helped us identify what we were really good at and guided our strategic plan. Baldrige became the way we worked, the way we evaluated progress, and measured results.

Our third application brought a gold award which opened the door to apply for the national award. At this point we began to truly understand who we were and our strengths; we were ready for the Nationals.

We embarked on this journey for the people in our community, we wanted them to know that when they trust Adventist Health Castle with their health, we are going to do the very best we can.

Some may look at the Baldrige program and words like “process,” “systematic,” and “framework” and interpret the Baldrige journey as being rather cool and mechanical. However, it helped us put an intangible purpose into words. Through that journey we were able to increase the tactility of our highest ideal—Love Matters. That motto was directly birthed from the core competencies criterion. It was something we had always felt but the required succinctness of the Baldrige application forced us to come up with a phrase that has reverberated beyond our hospital. Because love matters, we must have quality care, service, and financial performance that exceeds expectations. It strikes a deep chord. “Love Matters” is not just something we say, it’s what associates feel, it’s what patients feel, and they tell us so.

In November 2017, after our second national application and second site visit, as president of Adventist Health Castle, I was overjoyed to receive the phone call from the United States Secretary of Commerce with the news that we had won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

Looking back on this now, I believe that anyone pursuing organizational excellence really should know about Baldrige. The whole Baldrige process of striving for understanding, of studying, detailed introspection, and identifying how all those pieces work together is what makes it possible for any organization to be the best that they can be.

My aspiration is to perpetuate the Baldrige process so that others can benefit. I have seen the transformation not only at Castle, but I have seen the results in other organizations. There are amazing things happening in health care, education, industry, and in cities across the nation.

At Castle, Baldrige was a vehicle to channel our efforts around getting the best results that we possibly could but within the context of our core competency of “Love Matters.”



*Kathy Raethel, President of Adventist Health Castle of Kailua, Hawaii, accepts the 2017 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, April 8, 2018*

