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Ten People to Watch

in Healthcare Contracting

Sparkle Barnes, CNECT



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of Southern California
San Diego, California

About Sparkle Barnes:

As executive vice president of CNECT, Sparkle Barnes serves as the principal leader and strategic driver of the national group purchasing organization (GPO). She is responsible for developing and executing long-term strategies, annual business initiatives, and regionally deployed tactics. In January 2016, she was selected for the role of chief strategy officer, an enterprise-wide position with Health Center Partners of Southern California. In this role for Health Center Partners and its Family of Companies, she balances strategy formulation and execution to create sustaining innovations that support member organizations and the 800,000+ patients they serve across 135 sites of care.

Barnes started her work in healthcare in 2002 in sales and member services with CNECT (then Council Connections), providing supply chain solutions for members. She returned to school and received a master's degree in human relations, then performed casework for the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, which provides assistance and financial/budgeting information to sailors and Marines who face financial difficulties. (She still volunteers and teaches classes for the Relief Society.)

Before her return to CNECT in 2010, Barnes worked for the Department of the Navy in Public-Private Ventures, overseeing the performance of private management

companies that are selected to construct, renovate, operate and professionally manage housing for military service members and their families.

About CNECT and Health Center Partners:

Affiliated with Premier, Inc, CNECT offers contracts covering all aspects of purchasing, from large construction projects to IT equipment and cyber security services, telecommunications and cellular services, pharmaceuticals and vaccines, reference laboratory services, med/surg supplies to office furniture, and more. CNECT is a wholly owned subsidiary of Health Center Partners of Southern California, a 501(c)(3) consortium of primary healthcare organizations and an advocate for its members, who serve the fundamental health needs of patients in communities across southern California.

Most challenging/rewarding project in the past 12-18 months:

“Positioning our GPO to serve our members in a value-based reimbursement (VBR) environment. As providers increase their contracts in risk-based arrangements and take responsibility for population health and patient care occurring outside of their own four walls, CNECT has aligned itself with supplier partners that can meet the needs of our members in a VBR model.”

In addition to supporting the GPO members, Barnes assisted Health Center Partners in the establishment of a clinically integrated network – Integrated Health Partners of Southern California – in June 2015, which is designed to help its community health center members be successful in a value based model by managing population health, improving efficiencies and performances in managed care and care transitions, integrating data and improving clinical performance, and providing high-quality care to lower income and uninsured patients.

Looking forward to:

CNECT is completing the second year of a three-year strategic plan that will position the organization to serve an estimated doubling of its membership to more than 10,000 organizations by June 30, 2020.

How are you better at practicing your profession than you were 5-10 years ago?

“Taking on an enterprise-wide role as chief strategy officer for the Family of Companies was transformational in how I lead CNECT. In the CSO role, I am on the front lines of policy, operational, and clinical decision support discussions in transitioning a care model from a fee-for-service environment to value-based reimbursement, enabling me to bring a perspective and experience from the front-line into CNECT to better position our members.”

What are the challenges or opportunities facing the next generation of supply chain executives?

“The transition to value-based care is not slowing down. If anything, it is accelerating. The future generation of supply chain professionals will need to be both experts in their fields and partners with their management teams as those organizations are more and more challenged to improve care quality and [achieve] cost reductions through value-based reimbursement models.

“The transition to value-based care is not slowing down. If anything, it is accelerating.”

“There is a real opportunity for supply chain professionals to partner with their GPO and become a part of the process. Sit on committees, engage in the available tools and resources, and bring this market intelligence, market awareness to their teams to use the information in managerial decision making.

“Systems are accelerating consolidations, budgets are getting tighter, keeping a check on costs is what makes the margin. Partnering with a GPO will become that much more imperative to leverage the market intelligence and keep abreast of industry standards and advancements in care. There is real power in coming together. The collective can produce data driven insights that cross market segments and create disruptions that improve supply chain efficiencies and quality outcomes.” ■