

ALUMNI FOCUS

Focusing on What Matters Janet L. Wolfe BS'85, MS, PhD

BY CAROL R. COOL

“You’re going to hear a recurring theme about the path my life has taken,” said JANET WOLFE BS’85, MS, PhD, “and that is how important my husband and my kids are to me. I am constantly striving to ensure my life, our life, is balanced.” It may not sound politically correct, but Wolfe doesn’t seem to care. And why should she? She’s a successful businesswoman, the owner of a growing pharmaceutical development company.

While a chemistry major at what was then PCPS, a macroeconomics course awakened in Janet a desire to go into business.

Her plan was to attend Wharton, but her engagement to Michael Wolfe BS’84, MS, PhD, complicated things. Mike was already doing graduate work at the University of Kansas (KU). PCPS friends told Janet that KU had one of the best pharmaceutical chemistry programs in the world, emphasizing that pharmaceutical chemistry was the practical application of chemistry. Being a pragmatic person, that appealed to her.

Both Wolfes were awarded fellowships at the National Institutes of Health after earning their PhDs. As their time at the NIH drew to a close, Janet looked for a job in industry while Mike pursued one

in academia. They got no offers near one another, and so both opened themselves up to work in either field. They ended up in academia, serving as assistant professors at the University

of Tennessee; Janet in pharmaceutical sciences, Mike in medicinal chemistry. They put together research programs, together and separately.

Labs took off, and today the private company employs 30 people.

Janet credits her business success to “a focused commitment to excellence and responsiveness.” Providing pharmaceutical R&D in the areas of analytical development, formulation, and bioanalytical support, Wolfe Labs has gained most of its business through referrals. “When you do a good job, people come back and tell others. We’re not just a pair of hands; we’re paid to bring our minds and creativity to the table,” said Janet. “Our service is totally customized.”

Juggling two intense careers with a family life requires focus, but with putting themselves through college and having children during grad school, the Wolfes learned focus early on. “USP trained me for excellence,” said Janet. “I’ve learned to focus on what I’m doing right now.” And right now that includes being a wife, a mother, *and* an entrepreneur. **USP**

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I could have had starting off. I had to raise funding, hire people—basically, form my own entrepreneurial operation.”

When Mike moved to Harvard, Janet could have gone into industry, but now she was used to running her own show. So in 1999, she began to do consulting and contract research, working part-time to accommodate her children’s school schedules. Two years in, she narrowed her focus to contract research. Janet’s first employee started on