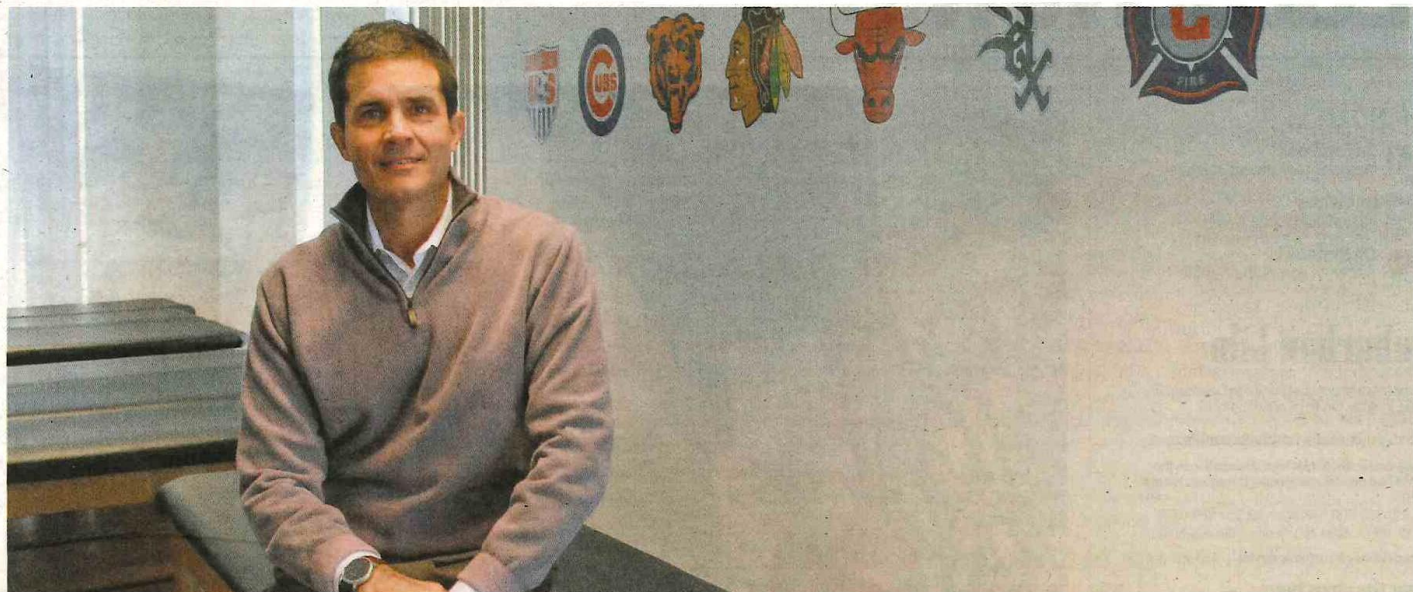


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GET TO KNOW  MARK KAUFMAN



Athletico Physical Therapy CEO and founder Mark Kaufman, pictured on Dec. 12. The company is 100-percent clinician owned. Erica Benson — ebenson@shawmedia.com

Local Athletico founder describes 'powerhouse' brand

By ALBERT CORVERA
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OAK BROOK — Mark Kaufman took a huge risk in a business about 21 years ago. And now that business is one of the most well-known physical therapy, athletic training and rehab centers in the Midwest.

"I put in whatever money I had," said Kaufman, of Oak Brook. "It wasn't a lot but we took whatever resources we had. I borrowed from my parents. I borrowed from my wife's parents. That was the way we started the business."

Kaufman founded Athletico Physical Therapy in the Gold Coast neighborhood of Chicago in 1991. Today, he serves as the company's president, which currently has 70 locations in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin.

"My intention when I opened it in 1991 in downtown was to open one site and keep it open and also do an athletic training outreach within schools and teams ... to get me out into the community," Kaufman said.

About Mark Kaufman

Age: 48
Residence: Oak Brook
Job: President, CEO and founder of Athletico Physical Therapy
Education: Bachelor's degrees from University of Iowa (athletic training and physical education) and Northwestern University (physical therapy), master's degree in exercise and sports sciences from University of Arizona
Notable: Once treated Billie Jean King and Harrison Ford in the early '90s

Thanks to his strong outreach, Athletico grew faster than Kaufman could believe. All the major professional Chicago sports teams, more than 200 colleges and high schools in Illinois, as well as clubs, endurance groups and performing arts groups have partnerships with Athletico.

"I think our brand is the strongest," Kaufman said. "We can describe it as a

powerhouse. I think it's based around our consistency and quality of care."

Kaufman and his staff developed a program called FOTO (Focus On Therapeutic Outcomes) as a way to collect data on how the company is performing on all levels of rehab and physical therapy. It measures patients' outcomes and satisfaction.

"We can look at that and compare that nationally and internationally with physical therapists around the world," he said. "We have an idea of where we're delivering. It tells us how we're doing and how we can improve."

While Kaufman didn't envision himself to be a businessman coming out of Northwestern University, the boom of his company forced him to step aside from his work with patients to focus solely on his role as president.

"I'm surrounded by a great group of therapists," Kaufman said. "The problem was that I liked working as a physical therapist and that's where all my training and education was based around."

Aside from his love for his work is that

of his family. Kaufman spends much of his free time with his wife, Mary Ann, and their three daughters: Fotini, a freshman at Northwestern; Margaret, a sophomore at Hinsdale Central High School; and Christina, a sixth-grader at Butler Junior High.

All three are talented swimmers, and Kaufman's favorite thing to do is watch his kids compete in the water.

"That's my hobby, it's going to swim meets," he said. "Swimming is a big part of what we do."

Kaufman's passion for community outreach didn't only begin and end with schools. He also serves as a board member for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago, and Athletico has a partnership with the group for charitable events.

"I have a passion for mentoring children. It's been shown that the support that a child gets is vital to their success," Kaufman said. "We support all kinds of charitable endeavors. It's part of our culture to give back and do different things."