People often choose a vocation based on their life experiences. For example, an athlete might seek a position as a coach or teacher. Someone who is good with figures and money might become an accountant or work in the banking industry. For Dawn R. Krause, the connection to her current position of senior administrative assistant in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) runs much deeper.

Krause, who had been a stay-at-home mother of three, faced the challenge of a lifetime when her son, Willy, was diagnosed with a terminal brain illness. After his passing, Krause gravitated to PM&R, where Edward A. Hurvitz, M.D., Willy’s physician for 11 years, served as chair of the department. She had become deeply involved with special needs issues and the job afforded her opportunities to continue that outreach while serving the University.

“I’ve been lucky that my personal and professional life have meshed so nicely,” says Krause, who joined PM&R to work in procurement. “I was very familiar with the department and their mission, so it was especially gratifying to find myself employed there.”

Since joining PM&R, Krause’s responsibilities have increased. She now supports the Center for Clinical Outcomes, Development, and Applications (CODA), dealing with pre- and post-award grants. She has helped develop metrics for assessing the strain on caregivers of patients with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and Huntington’s disease. She says working out of the North Campus Research Complex affords her the opportunity to rub shoulders with a diverse group of researchers from around the world, who come to Michigan to collaborate with the best.

Krause’s promotion is no surprise to those who supported her nomination for the Support Staff of the Year Award. They say she enjoys an excellent rapport with faculty, staff and students and is thirsty for knowledge, while constantly looking for new challenges. She brings a positive energy to the office that no one can replicate, and she is always willing to learn, evolve and take on new responsibilities in service to others.

That service includes planning the “Reach for the Stars for Cerebral Palsy” event in 2015. In addition, her family traveled to Washington, D.C., last year on behalf of PM&R to advocate for Medicare coverage for complex rehabilitation technology. In December 2015, President Obama signed S-2425 into law, protecting coverage of technologies such as advanced wheelchairs and other devices that are needed to keep PM&R patients safe and mobile.

“Dawn is always positive, energetic and innovative in searching for solutions. She is a ‘go-to’ person who makes life better and easier for those around her.”

— Edward A. Hurvitz, M.D., James W. Rae Collegiate Professor and chair, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation