

Juvy McCarthy

The Most Good

When Juvy McCarthy's father finished his training as a surgeon, he could have worked in the United States to practice medicine, living a life of luxury with his family. But he had become a doctor to help people, and he knew he could do the most good by serving the island in the Philippines where he grew up. There, against the beautifully lush backdrop of mountains leading down to the glittering water of the bay, he had been a child forced to watch his brother die from a disease that could have been easily cured with the help of a physician. Reeling from the senseless loss, he vowed to study medicine and return one day to help the impoverished community. True to his word, he came back after medical school, set up a clinic, and then built a hospital on the island, where it would do the most good.

Juvy grew up watching her father's patients pay him in chickens and fruit. She saw him treat each patient alike, whether it was a wealthy politician or a poor villager. His vocation wasn't about making money for himself—rather, it was about providing valuable and meaningful service to the community. It wasn't until she left and returned to the Philippines many years later that she fully understood how unique her father's sacrifice was, and it wasn't until she joined Akima, LLC, that she realized how powerful it can be to give back in such profound ways.

Now, as the President of Akima's Technology Solutions & Products Group, she manages over \$500 million in revenue for the benefit of 13,000 Alaska natives living below the poverty line. "They're the most grateful, humble, gracious people I've ever met," Juvy says today. "Our success means dividend payments, scholarship, infrastructure, cultural preservation and better lives for those who need them. They are why I'm here, and my mission is to do the most good I can for them."



Akima is a \$1.2 billion holding company supporting a diverse portfolio of leading IT, data communications, systems engineering, software development, cyber security, space operations, aviation, construction, facility management, fabrication, and logistics companies. Its \$2.4 billion parent company, NANA Development Corporation, was formed in the wake of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to serve as an economic development support mechanism to improve outcomes for Alaska natives. NANA's

13,000 shareholders are Inupiat, an Inuit group with a population of 7,500 people living in eleven traditional communities or villages across northwestern Alaska.

Juvy's group is one of five under the Akima banner, and she oversees eight companies, serving as Acting President in some cases. Five are cleared top secret technology companies, while another is ranked fifth on *Washington Technology Magazine's* 2013 list of top one hundred 8(a) companies. One of her companies performed and managed the largest Active Directory and Exchange migration for 850,000 Air Force users into a single "forest," marking the largest migration of its kind globally. "Our whole mission is to build a profitable and sustainable business for our shareholders," Juvy affirms.

Juvy joined the NANA family of companies in 2004 as a VP for TKC Integration Services (TKCIS), which later became Affigent. She helped generate 70 percent of TKCIS's revenue in its first two and a half years of operation. In 2007, she left to help a woman business owner grow her 8(a) business from six to 36 clients, quadrupling the company's revenue in nine months. At that point, NANA's holding company, Akima, asked her to return as President of TKC Global, one of its companies under the Technology Solutions & Products Group. "I was drawn back to Akima to

work on behalf of the many, rather than one at a time," she reflects. "On the longest of days, you remember that you're doing it for the 13,000 shareholders that really need you. You're not working for corporate America—you're doing it for the Inupiat."

At the helm of TKC Global, Juvy examined the company's financials and knew this would be no walk in the park. With no past performance in the federal space, she would need to build from scratch to achieve market penetration. "In hiring executives, I look for people that have revenue generation skills," she says. "I look at business like cars. It can have leather seats and a high-powered engine, but what's going to take you from Point A to Point B is gas. Gas is the key component allowing the car to achieve its purpose and function, and it's sales that pumps gas into the car. That's why the leaders I hire have to have business development experience, and also why I focus on building sales-friendly organizations focused on revenue generation. Everything else can be managed."

Within two years, TKC Global had grown so quickly that Juvy was given another company to grow, Qivliq Federal Group. Again, she turned the company around and made it profitable, and in 2013, she was named President of the group. "In this role, I lead my team to success by having a heart and working hard to make sure our employees are happy," she says. "People are never just numbers or titles to me. I care about their families, spouses, children, and grandchildren. Our team is essentially a network of people I care about."

Deep relationships and a sense of community were the lifeblood of Juvy's upbringing, where her father worked to provide for the people around him in any way he could. She grew up the third of six children in a developing country where poverty was rampant and a middle class was virtually nonexistent. "There, you either worked for somebody, or others worked for you," she recalls. "Young people graduating from high school didn't feel a thirst to go to college because they saw they could just live off their family's inheritance. They didn't have a lot of drive and felt very entitled. But my parents were different. They said there was one thing they could give me that nobody could take away, and that was education. Education was important to them above all else."

Though Juvy excelled in school and loved following her father around as a little girl, she swore she'd never become a doctor the day she accidentally stumbled into the operating room while he was performing a procedure on one of her classmates. He worked as a general practitioner and surgeon on the islands, while her mother, a friendly and social woman, helped as a registered nurse. Their practice was known far and wide, and neighboring cities and towns loved her father for the care he provided. The concept of a vocation that improved the well-being of whole communities had innate resonance for Juvy, but she was the first of her siblings to reject the medical route. She felt firmly that her future lay elsewhere.

When Juvy graduated as class valedictorian and received her school's leadership medal, she went on to the University of the Philippines, the country's premier institution of higher education. During her freshman year, her father, always protective, arranged for her to live in a dormitory convent oriented around the philosophy of giving back that had been important throughout her childhood. To earn funds for charity, the residents were required to take turns operating a snack cart in the dormitory for students to purchase late-night sustenance. While the mission was noble, Juvy disliked the obligation and the fact that it cut into her studying time, so she began strategizing the quickest way to sell all her inventory in the shortest amount of time possible. "My entrepreneurial side shown through as I began thinking about profit and loss and how to maximize sales and revenue," she recalls. "I decided to stray from the typical inventory of cookies and tea, instead opting for high-margin, high-demand products like cigarettes and beer. I sold out in 15 minutes and had the highest profit margin in the history of the store!"

While Juvy was soon discovered and reprimanded by the nuns, she was inspired by her interest in business and by making entrepreneurial choices to generate the best possible outcome for the cause. She was still unsure of what her future held, however, and decided to major in political science with the plan to become a lawyer. She later changed her tune, however, as she observed the rampant corruption in the legal system in the Philippines. The reality hit particularly close to home when a judge began extorting her father, bringing him to the brink of bankruptcy. The

Philippines' National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested the judge after her father helped set up a sting operation, but the damage was done, and Juvy decided that law wasn't for her.

Though the end goal was still uncertain, Juvy powered through her coursework and finished her graduation requirements within three years, leaving the last year for more leisurely classes and pursuits. With free time on her hands, she decided to accompany her friend one day to the American library in town to wait while she filled out applications to U.S. graduate schools. Juvy grew so bored waiting that she filled out several applications herself, even though she had already registered for the Asian Institute of Management's MBA program. She was surprised when she was accepted immediately to four different American universities.

Juvy had never planned to pursue education in America. But when she was robbed in a cab one evening on the way to a party, the shock of the trauma opened her eyes to new possibility and new adventure. "I began to feel that maybe the Philippines wasn't the right place for me," she recalls. "I thought about what it would be like to study abroad and see the world. I had always had a free spirit and a yearning to explore."

Given her political science major, Juvy set her sights on Howard University for its location in Washington, DC, the center of political activity in the U.S. Her task then fell to convincing her parents to let her go. It was exceedingly difficult for her father to even consider allowing her to go, but others in her family were convinced she'd return home in a couple months' time. She had lived a sheltered life growing up, and her father finally agreed to allow it, believing it would teach her a lesson.

Juvy's determined, indelible spirit, however, was more resolute than anyone in her family imagined. She was surprised to arrive on Howard's campus to discover that it's a historically-Black college. "I had grown in a context that definitely had some prejudice, so I was grateful to have the opportunity to meet so many great people at Howard and erase those preconceived notions," she says. "It was an invaluable experience for me, realizing that America has a multicultural population and that the world is better when we all coexist."

Despite meeting many close friends, the transition to independent living in a new country

wasn't easy. Gradually, from learning how to do laundry to figuring out how to cook a hotdog, she began to get the hang of it. As she worked through her first year, she anticipated that her father would cut her off financially when he realized she wasn't going to quit and come home, so she applied for a graduate assistantship teaching undergraduate courses for a professor. She landed the position, which covered her tuition costs and paid a stipend of \$500 a month. It was enough for Juvy to rent a small room and make a living.

"There were times I wanted to pick up the phone and tell my dad to get me a one-way ticket home," she remembers. ". I was trying to get by, paycheck to paycheck, hardly able to afford McDonalds. But the difference between my siblings and I, the thing I found that was so meaningful, was freedom. I made my own decisions, and I lived with the outcome, good or bad. It was the process of becoming truly self-sufficient and truly free to make my own decisions—to me, that's the most valuable thing I could ever pursue. As hard as it was, I made all the decisions on my own, and as poor as I was, I was very happy. I didn't look back."

In fighting for survival and self-reliance while working toward her masters in International Relations, Juvy unlocked her own passion. "If you grow up with everything provided for you, it's hard to find yourself," she reflects. "It's hard to know what you need or want. But through that time, I began understanding my own direction. What did I want? What was my passion? It was a crucial time in my life where those important realizations were beginning to take place."

Though she was offered a position at the Brookings Institute as an assistant to the fellow overseeing Nicaraguan affairs, she decided the travel obligations were too much. Instead, upon graduating, she took a part-time job as a receptionist at a car dealership, where she was promoted to a marketing position after only a month. She quickly became Director of Marketing, and though she ultimately decided to pursue a different path, her first exposure to the world of sales revealed a true affinity for the work, and a deep connection with the customers she served.

From there, Juvy transitioned to an administrative position at a commercial real estate firm, and then accepted an entry level sales job at a small business in Fairfax called Commonwealth Copiers. Excelling in sales yet again, she was

quickly promoted to a director position. "I loved interacting with people in that capacity, so I decided to explore it more," she reports. "I learned about a model for operating business centers in hotels, so at 27 years old, I approached the Hyatt Hotel in Crystal City and offered a proposal to the general manager, Ronald Bauman. My vision was to serve all the business needs of the hotel guests, marketing the services for the business center along with the services of their conference rooms. I explained how this would give them an edge over other hotels in booking conferences, and Ronald agreed."

As part of their contract, Juvy was permitted to set up an office in the hotel rent-free. She called the Director of Engineering and requested a high-traffic area for the office so conference participants would easily notice her. Her husband helped her formally incorporate her company, and she approached the owner of Commonwealth Copiers to discuss the transition. Mike Sarelson, an entrepreneur in his own right, was sad to see her go, but incredibly supportive of her dream to push the envelope by starting her own business. Still a mentor to her to this day, he graciously gave her a copier with the understanding that she would cover maintenance and copies. Juvy bought a fax machine from Mike, and Washington Business Center LLC began operation.

Juvy recouped her investment within six months and enjoyed a very profitable business thereafter. Her husband, Kevin McCarthy, continued to support and help her advance the company. "I wouldn't have been able to do it without him," she affirms. They bought a home, and Juvy found herself working incessantly, hiring on employees to help with the ebb and flow of the seasonal hotel conference cycle. She worked nonstop for seven years, but when she got pregnant with her daughter Kaycie, she finally decided to reevaluate her lifestyle. "At first I thought I was superwoman and I'd be able to do everything," she says. "But I learned I had a high-risk pregnancy, and my priority was my child, so I sold the business to Hyatt."

After Juvy and her husband, Kevin, welcomed their healthy daughter into the world, she decided to return to work and was quickly snatched up by The Brattan Group, where her remarkable revenue generating skills elevated her to Director of Sales after a couple months. A year

later, she joined Internosis, later acquired by EMC. She was later offered a job by Microsoft, but then 9/11 hit. It was her daughter's first day of preschool in Herndon, Virginia, and Juvy was unable to reach her by phone. As luck would have it, shortly thereafter, she was offered a job by DLT Solutions, located four blocks from her daughter's school. "My daughter was my priority, so even though Microsoft was a good offer, it was a no-brainer for me," she says.

There, Juvy helped jumpstart a services business and entered the world of federal procurement. Then, after a brief stint at Telos as Director of Sales, she was hired by her former boss from DLT to join the Akima effort, turning down other offers from Microsoft and Oracle. "When I first heard about this Alaska Native Corporation, I was very skeptical that there was actually an impact," she says. "Then I did my research and began to find out who these people were, and what possibilities existed. The more I learned, the more right it felt. I looked at the people who worked for the corporation and saw my father, who was willing to make sacrifices to give back. I knew it was the right place for me."

In advising young people entering the working world today, Juvy feels there's too much pressure for kids to figure out what they want to be when they grow up. "If you don't know, don't worry about it too much," she insists. "You'll know it when you see it. And when you see it, make sure you follow it. I followed it across the world, traveling 10,000 miles to pursue my dream. Focus not on your setbacks, but on positivity and performance. Discrimination exists in the world, but the best thing you can do is focus on overcoming it. And the best thing you can do is to focus your effort and attention where it will do the most good. That's why I'm working at Akima now, and it's why I'll return to our town in the Philippines one day to help that island closest to my heart."

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