Kenneth E. Raske
President, Greater New York Hospital Association

Recipient, Health Care Leadership Award

The United Hospital Fund’s Health Care Leadership Award recognizes extraordinary personal leadership to improve health and health care in New York City. This year the Fund is pleased to present the award to Kenneth E. Raske.

Ken Raske has been at the helm of the Greater New York Hospital Association for more than twenty-five years—and he has yet to take a breath. A singular energy force, Ken’s commitment to New York’s health care institutions and their patients has only grown since he first arrived in New York, an ambitious young economist from Michigan who became the association’s president at age thirty-five. A uniquely skilled and passionate leader, he has created the country’s premier health care trade association, fueled by far-reaching and successful businesses.

Tenacious. Focused. A born leader. A formidable negotiator. Colleagues have no shortage of ways to describe Ken Raske. But at the heart of Ken’s success is a core belief in the critically important role of hospitals—in people’s lives, in communities, in the economy as a whole—and a deep understanding of the pressures facing the individuals leading them.

In an era of rising costs, changing technology, large numbers of uninsured patients, and new federal health reform legislation, the number and scope of issues confronting New York health care executives are daunting, and as varied in their impact as one institution from another. It takes a rare leader to unite the chief executives of very different types of organizations—highly competitive academic medical centers and specialty hospitals, vitally important community hospitals caring for New York’s poorest and most vulnerable patients, and long-term care institutions, focused on the needs of the elderly and disabled—but Ken Raske is that leader. His hallmark is mobilizing these diverse providers and finding common ground so they can speak with one powerful voice, for the benefit of the larger community. And he is also known for
forging a unique and powerful partnership between the Association and the 1199 SEIU health care workers union.

The ability to distill complex issues—such as arcane hospital reimbursement formulas—and then articulate, in the most compelling way, the real-world, practical impact of a given policy or proposal is another of Ken’s defining traits. He understands both the economics and the human dimensions of health care, and knows what resonates with the distinct audiences he needs to reach. Ken’s enormous skill working with government leaders on both sides of the aisle is undeniable. And he is as at ease briefing business executives and hospital trustees on the health care community’s vital role in the economy as he is rallying an enormous crowd of health care employees to fight proposed health care budget cuts.

Indeed, when times are tough, Ken Raske is at his best. Legislators and hospital CEOs alike say that when budget negotiations are deadlocked and all players stymied, Ken kicks into high gear. He’s known for his incredible resolve—and for coming up with the one idea or solution that no one else has considered. The ability to lead in times of crisis was never clearer than in the days following the September 11th attacks, when Ken guided the association’s round-the-clock efforts to coordinate the hospital response.

Those efforts, and all the association’s work, are a reflection, too, of Ken as the dynamic, driven, and insightful CEO. On his home turf, at the offices of GNYHA, Ken has recruited a “dream team” staff of analysts, researchers, lawyers, lobbyists, and communicators—while understanding the importance of, and showing great deference for, his own board of governors. Under Ken’s guidance, the Association has also developed multiple businesses that represent $8 billion in commerce across the country and generate significant cost savings for providers and resources for the Association.

That ability to lead, to negotiate, to bring great resources together over the past twenty-five years has produced significant changes in the New York health care community. Ken has been a fierce advocate for protecting funding for teaching hospitals, has fought for fair payment practices by private insurers and HMOs, and has launched, with the United Hospital Fund, the largest regional quality improvement collaborative in the country, now involving sixty-five hospitals working together to improve health care and patient safety. But those closest to Ken would say that the successes that mean the most to him relate to increasing access to care for the uninsured and protecting the Medicaid program and other funding streams for safety net providers. In 1999, Ken helped lead a broad-based coalition that won passage of the legislation creating Family Health Plus, which now provides health insurance for nearly 400,000 low-income working adults.

For his impressive achievements on behalf of New York’s health care community, and all New Yorkers, the United Hospital Fund is proud to salute Kenneth E. Raske and his skill, his leadership, and his unwavering and indefatigable dedication and loyalty. The intensity of Ken’s commitment is inspiring, and his powerful advocacy has helped distinguish the greater New York area as a leader and innovator in patient care.