

**BW** EXECUTIVE PROFILE

# Campbell helps bring attention to Colorado

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BOULDER — Biotechnology is one of those intimidating-sounding professions most people would not find by happenstance. But, as her friends and colleagues will tell you, most people are not Alene Campbell.

The 60-something Boulderite has been in top jobs at several biotech and health-care firms in her career, and in February became CEO of Boulder-based Prima-Temp, a pioneer in continuous temperature monitoring soon to launch a fertility monitor that pairs to a smartphone app.

For Campbell, taking the job had a highly personal tie-in: Another promising application of this technology lies in identifying warning signs for infectious disease. “I see a huge need in that area from my own experience,” Campbell said. “I was getting close to retirement, but I said, ‘Wait a minute: one more thing.’”

Indeed, that Campbell has helped bring many lifesaving technologies to market seems unjust given the hand she’s been dealt: the aneurysms, the hip surgery that didn’t take and the partial leg paralysis that remains, the high risk for recurring stroke. She almost died of sepsis in 2011 and this year contracted it a second time. Given all this, Campbell and her team are already interviewing for her eventual successor at Prima-Temp.

“My physicians are telling me in no uncertain terms,” she said, “that I need to slow down.”

Campbell’s longtime friend Paula Schild, a Boulder-based psychotherapist who met Campbell in a Jewish baby birthing class, has supported Campbell through many of these stressors: “Alene has a strong sense of responsibility — sometimes to her detriment — to go the extra mile,” said Schild. “It’s my role to encourage her self-care: ‘This is your day off. Please do not look at another email.’”

At the same time, the science of recurring biologic signals continues to motivate and fascinate Campbell. Chronobiology — the idea that patterns in a woman’s core body temperature can help identify her most fertile period — has never been more able to serve the approximately 4 million women a year who try to conceive in the United States. Prima-Temp’s first product, the Priya Personal Fertility Sensor, monitors temperature via a small, flexible ring worn inside the vagina, sending a smartphone alert when a woman is most fertile. (It will have a soft launch in Europe in spring 2019 via a partnership with Gideon Richter.) In October, Prima-Temp also acquired all the assets of



COURTESY ALENE CAMPBELL

Alene Campbell enjoys hiking with her dog, Otis.



Kindara, which makes an eponymous fertility-tracking app as well as Wink, a Bluetooth-enabled fertility monitor. Describing the process as “a merger of friendlies,” Campbell is now CEO of that combined entity.

Campbell is from a family that valued education and emphasized that she could study her way into doing anything she wanted. “My parents didn’t believe in impossible,” she said. After an undergraduate degree in languages from Colorado College — she still speaks French, Spanish and Italian fluently — came an MBA in finance and marketing from the University of California at Berkeley. At the request of her professors, she

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took on some projects for a couple of biotech startups. “I totally stumbled into it,” she said. “Nobody even knew what biotechnology was at that point. It’s been big fun.”

Bob Berkowitz was the first to hire her out of school. For his startup, Hana Biologics, Campbell’s early projects included developing and marketing Amnistat, a fetal lung-maturity test sold to physician communities and hospitals.

“We needed smarties, and I trusted her,” said Berkowitz, for whom Campbell continued to work after the company went public in the mid-1980s. From early, Berkowitz said, the diligent and clever Campbell “had the capability and interest in running companies” and was one of very few women in biotech management positions at the time.

Describing herself as a “science geek and science fan,” Campbell holds

a deep reverence for the scientists and clinicians she has watched and learned from since then, downplaying what appears to be a preternatural capability to comprehend scores of industry complexities: “Oh, I’m a complete impostor,” she said. “I’ve been fortunate to work with a ton of brilliant people that I just admire the heck out of.”

While executive vice president at consumer products company Chemtrak, Campbell gave birth to a daughter, Emily, in 1993. At the time, Campbell’s travel schedule — breast pump in tow — was grueling, but a chance meeting at an industry conference would present an opportunity for reset. Charles Mittman, then a board member of Ribozyme Pharmaceuticals, based in Boulder, had caught wind of her many accomplishments, and a few days later, Campbell was on a plane. Compared with the grittiness of San Francisco, she said, Boulder felt safe and clean, but leaving the biotech nexus of the Bay Area was a leap of faith: “Colorado was not on the radar at that point,” she said — but she was determined to help it be.

Having repeatedly risen to senior executive and CEO roles by then, Campbell said she had to do twice as much homework as the men she worked alongside. “I would present logical arguments, and these men would get so emotional,” she said. “They weren’t listening to the facts or the realities of who we were up against. There was so much testosterone.”

In 2001, she married Keith Campbell, a Denver native and chemical engineer. Their twin girls, Celeste and Sophie, were born in 2004. Between the birth of Emily — now an infectious disease specialist at UHealth — and her twins, who are now in high school, being a working mom has become easier, Campbell said, thanks to technology.

“You don’t have to be in an office from 8 to 6 every day,” she said. “The ability to care for children and also do a conference call at 7 a.m. has greatly improved. That was not the case 10 years ago.”

While Campbell expects to enter a sort of fluid retirement in a couple of years, she still hopes to consult at Prima-Temp and for other clients. She looks forward to continuing some of her favorite healthy activities like swimming and yoga; hikes with her dog, Otis; and spending more time with family.

Her friend Schild said the two have been toying with the idea of taking a class together. “Maybe a salsa or swing class,” Schild said. “We both love to dance.”