



From the Executive Editor

by Shannon Dier, MS, CCLS

This is my final column as Executive Editor for ACLP Bulletin. I have truly cherished the last four years as part of the editorial team. I have had the privilege to work with so many amazing child life professionals who are eager to share their story with this community. I am continually amazed by the work that my peers are doing, by their insights and their passion, and by their vulnerability as they share of themselves in this public way.

I have always been fascinated with the power of stories. As a child, it began with a love of reading and the way a story could transport you into another time, another, or another person's experience. As I grew older, I began to realize how

narratives influence the way we see the world, how the words that we use and the stories that we tell about events that have happened, whether to us as individuals or to a society, have the power to shape what we think.

As child life specialists, we use stories everyday in our work. Some ways are obvious: using a preparation book that narrates the process of going to surgery, reading a picture book alongside a therapeutic activity about feelings, or even writing a chart note about a patient encounter. Stories are also woven into child life work in more subtle ways. When we advocate, we narrate the patient and family's concerns from another perspective, carefully choosing our words to have the most impact for that particular audience. When a child has experienced trauma, we try to help them frame the story of what happened in a way that ends with a sense of safety.

Stories also shape our professional identity. The first question of every child life interview is almost always, "Tell us about you. How did you end up pursuing child life?" And the answer is a story, our own story, the one that we tell over and over through all the steps of entering the field and finding a job. This story explains our reasons for doing this work, and it reminds us why we keep going when the journey is hard. Because this work is not easy. We become a part of each patient and family's story as they go through challenging times, and they become a part of ours.

I think a lot about the stories that we carry as child life specialists. Having worked with chronic patients for many years, I hold many sad stories and also many beautiful, poignant, amazing stories; sometimes my stories are all of these things all at once. I know many of you hold stories like this too. The challenge is that there aren't many places where we can tell these stories or many audiences who would understand what they mean and why they matter so much.

ACLP Bulletin is one of those few places where our community can share the stories of our work. Stories that encourage reflection, share innovative practices, and celebrate success and growth. In this Spring issue, Belinda Hammond reflects on her experiences as an adult patient with children who needed child life support. Lauren Holley shares how a child life specialist can support children involved in research studies, and Amy McGory describes a unique program that brings together a love of reading and love of dogs to better support hospitalized patients. We also celebrate Julia Mendoza and Lucy Raab as this year's Mary Barkey and Distinguished Service award winners. As you read this issue, I encourage you to think about the stories you can share and consider writing for Bulletin.

Now, as I reflect on the close of this chapter, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude for the colleagues who have helped to shape this part of my story. For all of our committee members who continue to invaluable feedback and support to get each issue ready. For Kathleen McCue, an incredible mentor and clinician whose insight was a blessing as we navigated unprecedented times. For Keri O'Keefe, who continues to amaze me with all she manages behind the scenes. And for Morgan Morgan, our incoming Executive Editor, in whose capable hands I confidently leave Bulletin, knowing there are only more good things to come.

Warmly, Shannon

