

As our communities and our world struggle with Covid-19, my thoughts and prayers are with all the families confronting this disease, the healthcare workers, and especially my fellow child life specialists continuing to navigate these rough waters and support those on the front lines, as well as the essential workers who are supporting us all by providing for our everyday needs.

I am honored and humbled to be included in this amazing group of Distinguished Service Award Recipients. I still can't believe it, and I have to pinch myself every time someone sends congratulation wishes.

First, let me thank Jennifer Lipsey, Mary Bean and the staff at the ACLP office for making the Distinguished Service Award so very special for me, even though it is virtual. A special thank you also goes to the DSA committee, to Jill Koss, President of ACLP, and to the ACLP board.

When Jill called me, I burst into tears. I am sure that isn't what she expected, but she was lovely. There are no words to express my gratitude to Jerriann Wilson for nominating me and for recruiting the help of so many friends, former students, colleagues, and even my daughters to support her nomination of me. Jerriann has been a role model and she has also become a dear friend. Last but not least, I want to thank the Archives Management Committee for doing such a great job, being easy to work with, and always making me look good. To all of you, I send love and hugs since we can't be together at this time. Thank you so much.

My journey into Child Life was not alone. I had the support of my beloved husband, Thom, in so very many ways, and of course my children, Amy and Megan, who continue to provide me with strength, support, advice and guidance, and my grandson, Finn, who each day teaches me something new and provides such joy in my life.

My journey began through a meeting with Gene Stanford. I was taking courses and completing student teaching to become a middle school social studies teacher, when Gene lent me Emma Plank's book "Working with Children in Hospitals", inspiring my passion for Child Life. He also told me about his meeting with Jerriann Wilson and how amazing and welcoming she was—I hoped someday to meet her.

I also had the good fortune of having Richard Thompson as my mentor as I designed the first child life program in the Mohawk Valley. The children I met as a child life specialist will always be dear to my heart. We learned from each other as I stumbled along. Thankfully, I did no harm, but I did I leave a child alone with paints and returned to find paint from floor to ceiling! The children and families I encountered in those early years influenced my beliefs, practices and love of child life. I also, learned in those early days that it was not only children and their families that needed psychosocial care but also children of parents who were hospitalized after traumatic events. I didn't realize the true impact of such child life services until years later when I met one of the parents of a child I had worked with after her

husband's tragic car accident and she expressed her sincere appreciation. I am thankful to the children and families for all they taught me.

As my career moved forward, I began teaching students about Child Life. My students have been an inspiration too. With each student, I realized that I had just four years to help them not only learn about the needs of the hospitalized child and family are and how to meet those needs, but also to understand what a privilege and responsibility it is to work with children and families. My students have come from diverse backgrounds, and I've learned that we need to help them understand that children and families are very diverse as well. We must teach and role model how to accept each child and family as unique and to design our approach that recognizes their individuality.

I am grateful to each and every student that I have had the privilege to teach and mentor. Two stand out today.

First, Rechelle Porter, I want to thank you for your support of my nomination as well as always being there to support the students that followed you through internships and mentoring. Of course, your advice for me when I needed a "younger" child life perspective has been invaluable. I am very proud of your accomplishments and your own journey to becoming Director of Child Life at New York- Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital. My heart and prayers continue to be with you and your city during this difficult time.

Second, Paul Dischiavo, who was one of my very few male child life students. After internship, Paul went on to graduate school to become a school social worker. I was able to see firsthand how amazing Paul was with children when I began working with him on the first program providing child life services in an elementary school. Paul taught me what it takes to work with children, parents, principals and teachers in a school setting, and looking back, he played a large role in the success of the child life school programs that followed. Our work was published in Missy Hicks' book, *Child Life Beyond the Hospital*, an opportunity for which I am very thankful. Missy has also been a friend when I needed that extra child life support.

Later, we expanded to provide child life services to five school districts in the Mohawk Valley. To be so widely welcomed by principals, teachers, children and families was truly a privilege. My dear friend and colleague Susan Cooper joined me in that endeavor and I extend my sincere appreciation to her.

In the mist of my teaching, mentoring and supervising, I was introduced to the Archives Management Group by Claire White. With Claire's assistance, I embraced this new endeavor and found that I loved it. History has always been close to my heart, so it was a special gift to be involved directly in the collecting and preserving of Child Life History.

I must admit that—when Claire first asked me—I didn't quite realize just how many boxes of history would arrive on my doorstep. It all worked out quite well once Utica College embraced assisting us by providing a home for the Archives in the Frank Gannett Library. I especially appreciate the great care Herb LaGoy has shown toward the ACLP Archives and the time he has taken to teach me about archival collection..

Through the Archives Management Group, I met Lois Pearson, my co-chair, and a life-long friendship grew. She is one of the most creative, talented, and empathetic people I know. Lois taught one of the first online courses in the History of Child Life and did an outstanding job.

Also through the Archives, Joan Turner entered my life like a whirlwind. Joan's enthusiasm, thought processes, and research aptitude made her the person we needed to take the Archives Management Group and move it to the next level. Her writing and organization were the driving force behind our two volumes of child life history, "Pips of Child Life."

Leslie Grissim was next to become chair of the Archives Committee and has done an amazing job. Her passion and love of child life shines through the projects she has initiated and through her ability to keep our group on task. Her knowledge of the history of play has taught me a great deal.

Finally, I circle back to my Archives mentor, Jerriann Wilson. Her knowledge of the history of the child life profession, as well as of the ACLP, is unparalleled. Through many conversations with Jerriann, I have learned so much and developed a deeper understanding of the events that shaped child life and the ACLP.

We can now proudly say that we have five Distinguished Service Award recipients among the Archives Management Group: Jerriann Wilson, Sheila Palm, Peggy Jessee, Joan Turner and myself. In addition, I am proud to work with the youngest members of our group, who will carry on our legacy of preserving and learning from our history. It has been an honor to work on ACLP conference presentations, anniversary videos, posters and postcards with this amazing group of women—and to share many wonderful dinners and great conversations with them.

There are so many highlights in my child life journey. Interviewing the child life pioneers will always stand out. Those experiences still leaves me awestruck. One of my fondest memories is visiting T. Berry Brazelton at his home and sitting in the room where that famous group of pioneers met to begin the Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals. Lois Pearson and I asked Dr. Brazelton question after question, and he answered every one patiently, never seeming to tire. At the end, he even took time to talk with my husband, who was a psychologist. I still have their interview on tape to treasure.

My interview of Ruth Kettner is also at the top of the list. Her stories of the early years of child life are legendary. Her memories were so rich that her interview set the record by going over the two-hour mark and continuing to a second session. Joan Turner also moderated roundtable discussions with the pioneers, which they recalled early challenges, like what to call this new group of professionals. When I began my career at St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Utica, I was called a “Child Life Therapist”!

I have been both the child life specialist and the recipient of child life services. My youngest daughter, Megan, was eighteen months old when she was admitted to the hospital with bronchitis. She was having difficulty breathing and I was terrified. I was so thankful when the child life specialist came in and emotionally saved the day with psychosocial care. I want to thank each child life specialist for providing children and families with the reassurance, support and understanding I felt that day as the child life specialist walked in to my daughter’s room. Today, I share this award with you for the amazing work you do.

To those child life specialists just starting out and those further along in their journeys—you have a unique opportunity to talk with many of the pioneers and leaders in child life to gain knowledge and a better understanding of child life. I encourage you to reach out and connect. Today, it will be through email, but I am confident that we will all meet again at conference someday. As Ruth Kettner told me, going to conference is like going home: being with people who understood you. Being with people who understand what it is to be a child life specialist—the good times and the hard times—is invaluable. Thank you all again so much. Stay safe and healthy.