



There is no Success Alone

By Cassie Ferguson, MD – Associate Director of the Kern Institute

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships." – Michael Jordan

For six of the seven years that the Children's Specialty Group has held a Halloween costume contest at Children's Wisconsin, the Section of Pediatric Emergency Medicine has either won first place or been in the top three (we don't count the year we were *allegedly* disqualified). This success is not by accident. Every year, months in advance, we vote on a theme and then each of us—faculty and staff—works on putting together our individual costume such that it fits into the theme. As an often overlooked and perhaps maligned department of the hospital (hey—we don't like to call you to consult at 0300 either), winning this contest has become a source of pride for us, primarily because we do it together.

Perhaps more important than our Halloween Costume Dynasty, our section is also working to address food insecurity among our patient's families, improve patient health literacy and numeracy, strengthen the coordination between the Emergency Department (ED) and our EMS colleagues, decrease sexually transmitted infections in our adolescent patients, share our experience in pediatric sedation medicine with colleagues in under resourced countries, sharpen our section's bedside ultrasound skills, ensure all patients have access to life-saving flu vaccines, and give kids who have been victims of interpersonal violence a chance to go to summer camp. Among other things.

The depth and breadth of our collective success is staggering. And the pride and reverence with which each of us holds these successes, regardless of the role we played in them, is a testament to the love we have for our patients and for one another.

It is also a testament to our leader, Dr. David Brousseau.

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." A.A. Milne

I will admit now that this Associate Director's Corner is less of an article and more of a love letter to my pediatric emergency medicine colleagues and to Dr. David Brousseau, our Section Chief of 11 years (whom we affectionately call D-bro). It is a love letter and also a letter to say goodbye. Dr. Brousseau is leaving for Delaware after 23 years of service to MCW, and I couldn't let him leave without trying my best to explain how much he has meant to me and to all of us.

Twelve years ago, I was a brand-new attending physician and had just moved back to Milwaukee with my husband, our three-year old son, and a newborn. I felt so lost; I remember wanting desperately to contribute and to feel useful, and yet not knowing how. Within three years, I was co-directing the Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Scholarly Pathway for the medical school, was selected to participate in MCW's Docere II teaching course and had begun an advanced improvement methods course at Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

I acknowledge that this required a certain amount of work on my part, but I also know that none of it would have happened without Dr. Brousseau and that those foundational opportunities were key to me building what has become an incredibly fulfilling career. Even more meaningfully, for the past 12 years Dr. Brousseau has consistently reminded me what I am capable of and what I contribute, empowering me to take risks and to step into roles that I thought were too big for me. And as I look around at my section colleagues and at what they have achieved, his legacy becomes very clear: Dr. Brousseau's leadership has enabled us all to thrive. We are purpose-driven and optimistic; we are continuously learning and pushing for change; we know how we can contribute to the greater good of the section and our community at large and we are given the space to do so. Even in our section's darkest hours, instead of fear and uncertainty and anger tearing us apart, we rose up together, becoming closer and more determined to navigate the darkness together.

"The good leader is he who the people revere. The great leader is he who the people say, we did it ourselves." Lao Tzu

In this country we like to think of good leadership as big and bold and brash. Crashing through obstacles, pushing past limits. Loudly declaring itself. All-knowing. Strength of conviction is more apparent than strength of character in the leaders we choose and in those who are chosen for us.

Dr. Brousseau, however, has shown me that leadership that enables thriving is quiet. It takes mindful, careful steps as if it is feeling the earth beneath its feet as it walks. This kind of leadership is inclusive. It widens our field of attention and helps us to be aware of when we are being called to be more loving, more compassionate, more open hearted. It engenders trust not through convincing but through presence. And it doesn't get frustrated when it has to explain how to calculate positive predictive value for the 1000th time during journal club.

"Goodbye always makes my throat hurt." Charlie Brown

Once a year I would sit down with Dr. Brousseau in his office for my faculty review. He always began our conversation by asking, "What is your favorite part of your job?" If I had that question to answer one more time, knowing that it would be our final faculty review and the last time I would have the chance to share my answer with him, I would say this: There are too many favorite parts to name them all. I love showing up to the ED and getting a hug from the

person I'm getting sign-out from. I love that when I want to switch a shift so that I can see my kid's baseball game, someone will instantly volunteer to help. I love it that our section meetings never end on time because we are all so excited to see and talk to each other.

Perhaps most of all, I love that I have the freedom to do what I love to do with people I love and the support and encouragement to keep doing it better.

Thank you, Dr. Brousseau, for pushing us, for fighting for us, for holding us all together. For helping us to thrive.

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