



A Chance Encounter

by Kimberly Walker, Social Worker, Egleston

There's no such thing as "just a job" at Children's. We're all making an important contribution in the lives of our patients. I know that, of course. But sometimes, even at Children's, you can get used to the rhythm of the day. You can forget how powerful your impact is.

About a month ago, I was reminded of just how much every minute of my workday counts for our patients and their families.

As a cardiac social worker, I typically don't work in the Emergency department. However, on this particular day, I was covering the Emergency department for a colleague when I was asked to meet with a family.

The family—a mother, father and two young sons—had been in a car accident around 3 a.m. that morning. They were driving to Florida from Ohio and in the brief time they were travelling through Atlanta on I-75, they had been in a terrible car accident. By the time I met the family, the mother and father were bruised and bandaged, having been discharged from a nearby adult hospital, and thankful to be reunited with their children. Their two boys were in fair shape with only a few lacerations.

The first thing I did was try to imagine myself in their shoes. I thought about what I would want if I were in their position. They were especially shaken up, because they didn't know anyone in town.

I set about getting them everything I thought they might need. It took an hour or two to get them comfortable, and when I was finished, I moved on to the next patient family on my list.

It wasn't until I saw the letter the mother of the family had written about her experience at Children's that I truly understood how terrifying the experience had been for her and her family. She said that the car accident was the most traumatic experience of her life. She went on to say, though, that she had only positive memories of her time at Children's. She even thanked me by name.

Her kind words moved me. I couldn't believe she remembered my name and took the time to write a letter. Her perspective on the care she received made me feel so proud.

On any given day, I meet with families on what might be the worst day of their lives, but I know I'll never take the brief time we spend together for granted again. It may just be a few minutes, but I have the chance to change a family's experience for the better. And that's a privilege I'm happy to have.

