

# Developing the Core of Pediatric Chiropractic Leadership

By Sharon Vallone, DC, DICCP, FICCP

Time passes unnoticed as we do what we love to do in our offices on a daily basis. Working with children and their families fuels the passion we have as chiropractors to serve their health care needs with a safe and effective alternative to the barrage of chemical and surgical interventions that are too readily offered to treat symptoms without first exploring and correcting the root of the problem. The foundation of health rests on the triad of chemical, structural and spiritual/emotional balance and although these interventions may save lives in emergent situations, any long-term improvements in health must address all of these.

As chiropractors, we address biomechanical dysfunction — we adjust the subluxation. Our treatment restores movement to the joint in turn affecting the local neural, vascular and lymphatic activity while restoring smoother communication to the central nervous system. The profound interplay between functional movement and neurology, therefore physiologic homeostasis, is being explored by other scientific bodies giving credibility to the original chiropractic premise. Therefore, we too need to remain on the cutting edge forever questioning, exploring and researching why what we offer our patients is so effective.

Time may continue to pass unnoticed, But WE must pause now and take notice! Our profession needs to continue developing its leadership to take us into the future. Leadership is about stepping up to whatever challenges are before us.

Personally and professionally, one of the first requirements of leadership is being an effective and powerful communicator. Whether it is your communication to (or about) your patients or other professionals, tweeting and blogging, to being a public speaker or author, few of us are born with the skills but are very capable of acquiring them. We acquire them through education and experience. Practice! Practice! There are books, podcasts, blogs and professional organizations that one can utilize to improve communication skills that will make you an effective leader in all of your pursuits.

Leadership is also developed by pursuing advanced education to hone specific interests or to explore completely new ones (like public speaking, professional writing or coaching the Special Olympics Baseball Team!). Those new ideas and techniques will be applied, perhaps, for example, in the office setting with patients or in the community, and then, with repetition and experience, sharing them as an instructor ranging from small groups to a university setting. Some

of our leaders administrate in a social media forum where rapid fire ideas about managing your practice, chiropractic techniques and individual clinical cases are exchanged on a daily basis. Some of our leaders share their wisdom with us as chiropractors helping us learn to care for ourselves, support our own passion to serve, or to build healthy, ethical financial stability to care for our families. The opportunities to teach are diverse and plentiful.

I can see some of you shaking your heads and declining the challenge. But I assure you, you are already on the path. Leadership begins in the home with our families. To quote a popular meme: “Children will follow what they see you do, not what they hear you say.” If what we accomplish in this life is to raise healthy, happy, responsible children to adulthood, we’ve accomplished a very important goal.

Leadership in the workplace is demonstrated by our integrity, fairness, dependability and self-motivation. This again, is the example we set but also the bar we raise for our employees as we hold them accountable to develop those same strengths in their interaction with you and your patients.

Leadership with our patients is provided by our service to educate and support them as they seek their own journey to health. We can only bring our patients as far as we are willing to work ourselves. It is a collaborative effort on many levels!

We all have the opportunity to provide leadership in our volunteer activities in our community and in our profession. Having the courage to step forward and volunteer, knowing you may not immediately succeed but being courageous enough to try and ask for support in areas you may need mentoring. To be willing to put in the time and do the most mundane or seemingly insignificant task that might be the cornerstone of accomplishing the ultimate goal for an individual (like a political campaigner who licks the envelopes for contribution requests) or an organization (like handing out playbills at your child’s orchestra performance)... No service is too small and each person who offers to help is a leader, an example of selflessness.

Professionally your leadership may move you to a role in your state, nationally or even internationally. We do not all have the desire to serve in this capacity but without those who do, we would have no forward progress let alone security to retain the gains we’ve already made. We are a pyramid of leaders each holding the next one on our shoulders.

Leadership doesn’t always put each one of us in the spotlight. It often can be helping others be in the spotlight. A

leader may help you rehearse your talk for the PTA, or edit your submission to the local newspaper. A leader may pass on an opportunity to appear on TV or request you represent the profession in front of the state legislature because they will be out of town. A true leader may be an excellent delegator who can identify and encourage the best person for the job to take the lead.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to be mentored by many of the great leaders, many in the chiropractic profession, too numerous to list without fear of leaving an important person out. To them, I am forever grateful for molding me both personally and professionally. I have also the joy of being touched by so many of our young leaders who hold the promise of our future. I encourage them to, in the words of a popular author, "Rise Strong!" I would also like to share with you the advice of the woman, Dr. Lorraine Golden, who showed me my own future in chiropractic:

"SERVICE is the best public relations that the chiropractic profession can ever have. We should never start any project with the sole purpose of getting something out of it as far as our profession is concerned. If the project is begun and carried out with the idea of serving the public — or a group of people in the general public — then it cannot help but succeed when it is pursued with the firm belief that it WILL succeed. There is work to be done— much work — so



*The late Lorraine M. Golden, D.C., founder and executive director of Kentuckiana Children's Center, Louisville, Kentucky.*

there must be people to do that work. When the foundation of a program is simply that of service, then individual differences are submerged in the sea of common interest. What better unity can be hoped for than the binding force of accomplishing together some project that seeks only to benefit persons outside the profession?"