

# AMWA's Linda Brodsky Memorial Journal

Volume 1, July 2014

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Looking at the role models portrayed in American media today, it seems difficult to believe that one of the most influential figures in television for over three decades was a humble, unassuming man in a cardigan sweater and sneakers. Mister Rogers showed up on the television screens in millions of homes every week to encourage children to make a difference in the world. Mister Rogers' book, *The World According to Mister Rogers*, contains countless wisdom regarding the important things in life and making the world a better place. One of my favorite quotes from this book reads, "As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has – or ever will have – something inside that is unique to all time. It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression." No one epitomizes Mister Rogers' words more than my dear friend Dr. Karen Kozlowski.

Dr. K was a prominent gynecologist in the area, but her practice is now limited to her specialty of pediatric gynecology. Before she retired from her general gynecology practice, I was fortunate enough to have her as my gynecologist. Her professional attitude and kind personality made every visit to the gynecologist bearable and, dare I say, close to pleasant. She could make anyone feel at ease during what is generally considered to be a dreaded doctor's appointment. However, what I loved about Dr. K was the interest she showed in me. Every appointment, she asked how school was going, what I liked and did not like, how my grades were, and what career I was interested in pursuing. Not only did she encourage me to continue doing well in school, she

often told me that I could do anything that I wanted to do in life. As I pursued the sciences in college and debated going into medicine, she continued her encouragement and told me that any profession would be lucky to have me. My parents also provided me with immense encouragement throughout my life, but this external source carried a great deal of value as well. It was not until I was in my second year of medical school that I realized the influence of Dr. K's encouragement.

As a second year medical student, Dr. K agreed to be my clinical medicine preceptor, allowing me to spend as much time as possible in her clinic to improve my physical exam and patient interaction techniques. Shortly after starting in her office, I began to notice that Dr. K asked all of her patients about their school work, what else they were doing besides school, if they were in relationships, and more. She took an active interest in each of her patients. Even if she had not seen a patient for a year, she would remember what had been going on in her last update. She encouraged every patient in their pursuits. As a pediatric gynecologist, many of Dr. K's patients are young girls in less than ideal family and social situations. She sees many young women who have survived sexual abuse, been shuffled through foster care, and been incarcerated in juvenile detention. Despite their grievous circumstances, she continues to encourage their interests and dreams. With many of these young girls, I often wonder if their only source of encouragement is Dr. K. She beams with pride when a patient reveals that she will finish high school or is able to go to college. However, if things with these young patients are not going well, Dr. K pauses her exam to devote time

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to counseling her patients. Sometimes, they do not want to talk, but the opportunity is always available. Dr. K is never concerned about a few extra minutes talking in an exam room, especially when those minutes could make a difference in someone's life. Every child leaves her office with a pat on the back or a hug and an encouraging smile for the road.

As a third year medical student now, I continue to recognize the impact that Dr. K has made on her patients, myself included, with her kindness, honesty, and encouragement. I have chosen to do a residency in pediatrics and my goal is to emulate Dr. K's actions in my practice. As Mister Rogers once stated, "Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life is a hero to me," and I hope that one day, I am a hero, as Dr. K has been to me.

