

Spotlight: Celebration

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Kathleen Killeen, MSW/MPA/LICSW/MLDAC/CAADC/ACSW/CMT, Behavioral Health Therapist for Mental Health & Drug & Alcohol

Good day, NCH team!

Meeting with Kathleen was like meeting with a dear family member who you haven't seen in a while: warm and comfortable with a hint of "I have so much to tell you – where do I start?" The walls are covered with artwork and guitars and the coffee table offered a variety of candy (as I learned, popping in a piece of candy gives patients time to think). The room is big, and yet – with the door closed and 3 of us inside – it felt like a comfortable and supportive place. Abby and I knew that we had found a great place to begin our journey for this project.

Kathleen wears many hats and has many titles. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, a Master Level Drug and Alcohol Counselor, a Trauma Therapist, an Expressive Arts Therapist, and a Music Therapist for Behavioral Health. The identity that she seems to rely on the most in her practice, though, is human being.

Speaking about trauma directly can be overwhelming and uncomfortable, so Kathleen empowers her patients to use alternative ways of expressing themselves. Through music, art, poetry, video games, and dance (just to name a few!) she listens to her patients.

She explained that art can help tell the story of a patient's journey, in the individual pieces that are created, the process of creating, and in the comparison of pieces by the same patient over time. By encouraging work from both sides of their brain, Kathleen supports her patients in ways that tap into their creativity and connect them with their humanity.

Kathleen is clearly passionate about the arts, but her strength is connecting to her patients on a human level. Her "team approach" aims to give her patients a say in their treatment. Kathleen noted, "If someone wants something I don't have, like a trumpet for music therapy, I will go out and find a trumpet."

As I think about the Values at NCH, it's easy to see Kathleen and her work. Her work is innovative -- so different than anything I've been a part of in healthcare, but clearly impactful. Her empathy and compassion for every patient is apparent in both her words and face when she speaks about them, and she values their teamwork as part of their care. She also shared that, when appropriate, she aims to be as transparent as possible with her patients (for example, letting them know that she can't make it to an appointment because she has a cold) understanding that the trauma her patients have faced can create trust and attachment issues.

Kathleen surprised me with her response when I asked her to share what the best moments are in her work. She explained that sometimes, when working with a patient and/or their family, in the midst of emotional and deep-rooted sharing, they'll have a moment where something funny will happen or be said – causing everyone to laugh until their stomachs hurt. There is something innately human about this experience; sharing a laugh never fails to help make everyone feel a bit better.

Thank you, Kathleen, for being you, and for your great work at NCH!

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernie Adams".

If anyone has any instruments that they're looking to donate, please reach out to Kathleen, as one of her greatest joys is to be able to send instruments home with her patients.



Pictured left to right:
Bernie Adams, LSSBB,
Chief Quality Officer, and
Abby Lane, Performance
Improvement Specialist

**Nominate
Someone!**