

MY "WHY"



**CFG RESIDENCY OUTREACH
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**CARMELYN VEDAR
RESIDENCY OUTREACH MANAGER
CFG HEALTH NETWORK**

**"IT IS A COMPANY I GIVE MY LOYALTY TO
AND ONE THAT DESERVES MUCH MORE
RECOGNITION."**

By Carmelyn Vedar

Getting started on this piece is proving a lot more challenging than I expected. This article comes from a very special place that I don't often share with too many people. In this time of a pandemic, it comes at a time when gratitude can sometimes be overshadowed and so I'm grateful for this platform to share my story.

CFG Health Network is launching a marketing initiative to better understand our company "Why". It is a company I give my loyalty to and one that deserves much more recognition. I decided to share my personal "Why" and hope that maybe some of you can relate to some of my struggles and personal journey to provide a better life for my family.

"THE MENTAL HEALTH ASPECT WAS IMPORTANT TO ME."

I began my career with CFG in 2016. I started out as a contractor in Talent Acquisition, thinking this was just a temporary position, and only intrigued because I had read that CFG was, in part, a mental health company. Little did I know that this company offered so much more variety in the types of practices we offer. The mental health aspect was important to me at the time because I was struggling with mental and behavioral health issues with my then 7 year-old son, Maximo.

Max was born with blonde hair and very fair skin. Although his dad is a fair Argentinean, this was still somewhat surprising as I am 100% of Filipino decent. So the blonde hair was probably the first of many indications that Max was different. He started his first few of days of life in the NICU due to low blood sugar and jaundice. He would soon not meet milestones like lifting his head or rolling over in the expected time. Due to a very proactive pediatrician at CHOP (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia), we soon discovered that Max was born with a rare genetic condition called Chromosome 9P Minus. There wasn't a ton of information and the information that was out there, was scary. This wasn't something like the low the blood sugar issue or jaundice that bili light therapy could cure.

This was a lifelong condition. And I began the process of mourning the child I thought I would raise and accepting Max for Max.

I remember taking Max to Cherry Hill Mall in the evenings (when there were less shoppers) with his walker so he could learn to walk on smoother surfaces. He didn't learn to walk until he was 3. But when he did, we threw him a parade around the neighborhood. It was a "lookout, world" moment. He saw so many specialists back then that I lost count. But physically, he was thriving. Socially - his smile, his hugs, and his sincere hospitality made him just about the mayor of Mt. Laurel, NJ. His passion for learning new languages made him popular in most cultures we encountered. Everything was looking promising.

Around kindergarten, Max started to display some behavior issues. For people who knew Max, it was hard to believe. Max is extremely friendly so when I would explain to family and friends the issues we were having, it was as if I was talking about a different child. Yes, our Max smacked a teacher in the face. Yes, he spit on her. Yes, he pooped in the principal's office. Yes, he's left me with bruises. Yes, he has thrown his shoes at me while driving and pulled my hair while on the highway. It became very dangerous, not only to me, but his two brothers as well.



“...SOMETIMES IT IS JUST A LITTLE BIT OF HOPE THAT KEEPS MOVING US FORWARD AND THE GRATITUDE THAT KEEPS US GROUNDED.”

So here I was in 2016 with a 7 year-old I was quickly losing control over. As a mom, I felt helpless. With an opportunity to work for this healthcare network providing a ton of resources on mental and behavioral health - the one piece in Max's care I was lacking in - I honestly felt it was fate that initially brought me to CFG.

Max had to be removed from school and I was running out of options and hope. I quickly found out about the C.A.S.T.L.E program in Camden, NJ that is run by wonderful employees of CFG. He had a team that included a caseworker, therapists, teachers, and psychiatric nurse practitioners. They involved the family. They showed concern and were truly invested in strategies that would help Max function outside of the program. Max was able to find the perfect combination of treatment. Max improved dramatically. And at the same time, I gained my confidence back as his mom and supporter.

I share this also because I know I'm not alone. Whether it's a child, a spouse, a parent, or yourself, mental health issues exist and it can feel crippling at times. Whether you choose an organization like CFG to get help or somewhere else, it's important that people realize that the support exists and people have walked in similar shoes who can offer some guidance.

Fate may have brought me to CFG. But it is the people, the dedication, and the opportunities that keep me here. Starting my journey as a temporary contractor, I didn't know where my career would lead. Leadership trusted in my abilities and offered me a permanent position in recruitment, followed by a promotion into my new role as Residency Outreach Manager. I have worked with a phenomenal team and together, as a work family, we are taking CFG to the next level.



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I have seen this commitment and enthusiasm in all aspects of CFG – from their outpatient centers, residential/partials, work in the hospitals, and all of the loyal staff in our correctional facilities. The people share a common passion of helping others. And it doesn't matter how old you are, or your skin color, or your background. People here care.

From my personal experience, CFG not only helped my son, but they gave me hope. In the crazy, ever changing world we live in now, sometimes it is just that little bit of hope that keeps moving us forward and the gratitude that keeps us grounded. My hope is that you find whatever support you need. Find that glimmer of hope that gets you to believe in something better again. And if I can help direct you in any way, please feel free to reach out.

Carmelyn Vedar
Residency Outreach Manager
CFG Health Network
Cell: 215-681-5280
cvedar@cfgpc.com
www.cfghealthnetwork.com



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