

FROM THE SIDE OF THE SWIMMING POOL AND THE EVOLVING STORY OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK

A message from the incoming editor

Karen VanderVen, Ph.D.

*University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA*

The story is that the Journal of Child and Youth Care Work was originally conceived by the side of a swimming pool—in San Diego. And interestingly, in that tradition, so were the final plans for transferring the editorship also made, years later, beside another swimming pool—this time in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

And so the story unfolds, and the Journal of Child and Youth Care Work continues, carrying with it themes from the past and the potential to elaborate and enlarge upon them for the future.

Since its inception 10 years ago, The Journal of Child and Youth Care Work has become an institution in the field, providing an arena to record and share the growing knowledge of the field but particularly the various forms in which this unique knowledge could be expressed. The Journal's distinguished Founding Editor, Dr. Mark Krueger, pioneered creative writing as another form of conveying the 'texture' of child and youth care. Now that he is moving on to serve the field of child and youth care in new and different ways, the question arises: What's the story now? What direction will the journal take?

The response is simple. It will continue its 'distinctive competence' of embracing an array of literary formats to tell the 'evolving story' of child and youth care work. The tradition of journals has been to report research results. For years we have indicated that our field is best approached through qualitative research methods, increasingly recognized as a way of telling a story. Thus, *The Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, as a vehicle for qualitative research in our field, can include:

- Standard academic and scholarly articles, giving new models or perspectives
- Descriptions of experience, conceptualizing them into theoretical and practice principles
- Quantitative research, presenting empirical findings and their implications

- First-person accounts, from practitioners and from children and youth themselves
- Creative work — poetry, stories, metaphors, even art work to enable us to take a different perspective.

The excitement of these formats is that collectively they will enable us to continue to tell our story: the story of the continuing evolution of child and youth care work as it builds upon its past history and plans for the future; the story of our personal struggles and triumphs; the story of new ideas and practices that we develop and set down then for others to try.

Why this emphasis on 'story'? There is probably no field on earth whose mission is to *tie as closely as possible to the lived experience of our client group: children, youth and their families*. Such lived experience generates 'story' as we work with these individuals and groups to understand, make meaning of their experience and, through this shared meaning, to generate new approaches to promote their growth.

Story foretells the future. Looking towards the future, I envision a scenario that will underscore the necessity for our field and its special approach to working with people and thus may include:

- The focus more on closeness rather than distance, in relationships and in professional services
- The inclusion of everyone in a person's life space as a focus of service, thus caregiving in a life span perspective
- The expanding of expressive activity as people look for new meaning in a restrained economy
- An emphasis in work with children and youth on their experiences and perceptions, and relating learning of skills and facts to their own stories
- A new way of life as tomorrow's youth take on environmental preservation as their cause.

Emergent trends such as these would seem to support our focus on 'story' and the ways we can frame and share the stories that will help us continue to grow in stature and effectiveness. Let us have your story, so that it is a part of our tradition and shapes our future until one day, by a swimming pool. . .