

Reflection

When I graduated college in May of 2024 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, my future did not include any plans to work with children, let alone become a Child Life Specialist. However, entering my senior year, I realized I had chosen the wrong major. I spent the next ten months trying and failing to envision my future with a degree I did not plan on using.

I have worked with children my entire life, and my mom and grandmother both had masters degrees in early childhood education, so I spent much of my life hearing and learning about child development from the both of them. After graduating, my mom encouraged me to look into child life as a career, and I decided to apply at Texas Woman's University over the summer. When I began my courses in the fall I knew I had made the right decision. This came as a relief to me after spending my senior year of college feeling lost, or "behind" my peers who already had accepted job offers, or planned on continuing their education. Taking a risk and choosing a nontraditional path scared me, but it is something I have never regretted.

This past summer, I was fortunate enough to travel to South Africa to complete my practicum, reaffirming my passion for this career. I learned how to apply developmental and play theories, support families, advocate for patients, and navigate language barriers to provide the best care possible. After completing my practicum, I was determined to get back into a hospital and gain more experience to become a better internship candidate. As of now, I currently work as a child life assistant at Children's Health in Dallas, while also working as a preschool enrichment teacher on days I am not in the hospital. Additionally, I volunteer at Children's Health weekly, and serve as a peer group facilitator for the national nonprofit Pickles, where I work with children ages 5-8 whose parents are in the end stages of cancer or have passed away. I have made it a goal to try and integrate my developmental knowledge I have gained at TWU to shape my

everyday interactions with children. In doing this, I have become a better teacher, volunteer, friend, employee, student, and overall person.

My journey to becoming a Child Life Specialist has had its fair share of rejection, disappointment, and moments of self-doubt. However, my passion for this work always prevails. Upon reflection, I feel grateful I had the courage to step outside my comfort zone after graduating college, because it resulted in finding a career that fulfills me; something not everyone has the privilege to say. I remain deeply appreciative of my time at Texas Woman's University because it has provided me with the knowledge and skills to become successful in my career.