

An APP's Approach to Advocating

Scotti Brackett discusses the APP's approach to advocating.



Featured Speaker:

Scotti Brackett, RN, APRN, FNP

Scotti Brackett is a Family nurse practitioner at Children's Mercy Kansas City. She received her Bachelor of General Education in 2003 from the University of Kansas, her BSN from Mid America Nazarene University 2006 and then received her Masters of science in nursing from the University of Missouri Kansas City in 2011. She started her career as a nurse practitioner in the ENT inpatient group in 2012. She has also worked at St Luke's Medical Group in a family practice setting. She has served as Adjunct Faculty for Johnson County Community College and Mid America Nazarene University. She has also spent some time also working at Walgreens in their convenient care clinic. She currently works in the Blue Valley Urgent Care at CM. She is passionate about equality in healthcare for people with disabilities. She is beginning the process of attaining her PhD in Nursing.

Transcription:

Trisha: Hi, guys. Welcome to the Advanced Practice Perspectives. I'm Trisha Williams.

Tobie: And I'm Tobie O'Brien. This is a podcast created by advanced practice providers for advanced practice providers. We will be highlighting our amazing APPs here at Children's Mercy and do some education along the way.

Trisha: We are so glad you're joining us. So sit back, tune in and let's get started.

Tobie: Today, we are talking about advocacy. An advocate, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is someone who pleads the cause of another. As the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg once said, "Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."

When Trisha and I were talking about doing this particular podcast, one person came to mind almost immediately, and that was our old friend, Scotti Brackett. So we are so pleased to have her on the podcast today. She was an APRN in the ENT clinic for several years and currently she is an APRN in the urgent care clinic.

Scotti has been working hard to establish equality in healthcare for those with disabilities. Scotti, thank you so much for joining us today. Can you tell our listeners more about you and your background?

Scotti Brackett: Thank you for having me, Tobie and Trisha. Just to give a little history about myself, I graduated from MidAmerica Nazarene with my nursing degree and went straight into Children's Mercy to start working on 2 Henson where I worked for six years. Then, I went to UMKC to obtain my masters and my family nurse practitioner certification. So after that, I started working inpatient ENT where I met Trisha and Tobie. I also worked a little bit in some of the clinics and the multidisciplinary clinics such as the Down syndrome clinic, fill in sometimes and the cleft palate clinics. So those were really good--I really loved those clinics.

Then I did choose to leave Children's Mercy as some people do, and one year later I came right back. So I do have one year of family practice experience, which I really wanted. I have a family practice certification, and I really wanted that experience in family practice. I found out a lot about myself, such as I love children more than adults. So I came right on back to home to Children's. And I spent a brief time in the emergency department downtown, and then the opening at Blue Valley urgent care came and once I came back. I spent a brief time in the emergency department and then went to urgent care Blue Valley. At that point, I had decided to attend the Academy for Professional Development with Cathy Cartwright. It was a new program at that time, but it intrigued me and I wanted to learn more about advocacy and how to be effective. So I took that semester long course and learned so much. I highly recommend it to anyone out there looking to learn more about how to do research and how to be an advocate and how to do these things.

I knew I had the passion, I didn't feel like I had the tools. So I took that course, and that is really where advocacy took off for me. My son has Down syndrome and he is four and a half years old. And he is obviously my inspiration for a lot of this. Having had him and being a healthcare professional gave me a very unique perspective and allowed me to see how things can be better and where equalities lie, not just for my son, but for others with Down syndrome and disabilities.

I just started networking. I started talking to people. I started letting people know my passion, know what I was about, know that I wanted to make the lives for people with Down syndrome and other disabilities better. And how can we do that?

The first organization that gave me the opportunity to be an advocate on a national level was the Down Syndrome Diagnosis Network, which I refer to as the DSDN. It is about providing up-to-date and accurate information to healthcare professionals for an appropriate diagnosis of Down syndrome specifically. I got involved with that because I had a rather disappointing prenatal diagnosis for my son and it sparked something in me that I still have today. Most people who have a prenatal or even a postnatal, a birth diagnosis of Down syndrome are told in a very negative way with a very grim outlook.

It's not part of the conversation usually to tell the good sides of Down syndrome and offer support. I was repeatedly offered adoption. I was repeatedly offered termination. I was never offered support. So I wanted to be the one to offer that support to that mom that didn't get it such as I.

That is where it all started for me. And I have since then done all of the networking, met as many people as I possibly can and become much more involved in other national committees and organizations aimed at equality in healthcare for disabilities, not just in prenatal diagnoses anymore, but in different aspects of healthcare as well.

Trisha: I remember sitting in the Academy for Professional Development with you. I had the honor of being in the same cohort as you and you sharing your story. And I remember-- I think that was a couple of years ago-- we had to write a letter to the editor, to our local city paper. And your letter got published. And I remember just being in awe of you in regards to the fact that you took a situation that knocked your family off of its rocker, and you'd let it catapult you into this amazing journey that you're on. And I just wanted to tell you that I find you amazing. I find you inspiring and I think that you're doing amazing work.

So when you talk about networking, kind of tell us what you told the people when you networked. What was your story? How did you get out there? What did you do? Where did you start to find these people to network with?

Scotti Brackett: What I started to learn was that networking is key in advocacy because it is all about and your connections. So I started by attending online educational series, such as the KU LEND, Leaders in Education of Neurodevelopment Disabilities. They have a webinar series for families. And so I started attending those online and started learning people's names. And then, I dove a little deeper and got a little more involved in our local Down syndrome guild and started memorizing people's names. Then I started digging around on the internet, looking for different organizations that I could be involved in.

I am talking late night, two-hour long searches of me, just trying to find a committee that I could apply for, trying to find an organization that I could become a part of, trying to find anything that shared my passion that I could become involved in and get my foot in the door. That's when I found an application for the Centers for Dignity and Healthcare for People with Disabilities, which is a national organization and I found an application for a subcommittee for prenatal diagnoses of syndromes. I applied and I was surprised I got it. And so I was allowed on that committee. And with that committee, I have met so many people. And then, because I talk a lot too, I let people know-- I took the extra steps to log on early so that I could maybe have two minutes with some people just to say, "Hi. Oh, we're logged on early. Well, how are you doing today? What's your name? What do you do?" I had to write their names down and where they were from and everything, because I wanted to know and I knew these were influential people.

So I started doing that and they started to know my name, which is not common. So I think that helped me maybe. Then I started to be invited to be on different committees and

research, be asked to be experts in different research areas of disability, then the Down Syndrome Diagnosis Network, where it all started and this whole time I'm still involved with them and their medical outreach team.

So with the medical outreach team, I go to a conference with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. I go to the conference. We have a booth at the conference and are advocating for more appropriate diagnoses of Down syndrome, asking these doctors to please tell these parents that there is support option as well.

Then I really started to get to know people at those conferences as well, because I went around and just do what I do. And I go around, I talk to everybody. So by doing so, you just start to meet people.

Now, the Down Syndrome Diagnosis Network has asked me to be their project manager for the medical outreach team. So I just actually started that about two months ago and we are creating a webinar. So that's my big project. Now that I'm creating a webinar to help educate, specifically OB GYNs and genetic counselors on a better way to give a prenatal diagnosis or a birth diagnosis of Down syndrome.

Tobie: Scotti, your work is amazing. I mean as an old colleague of yours, I just have to say I'm so proud of you. You are so inspiring. It is really awesome to hear all of this work that you've done. Gosh, you have to be so busy. How do you have time to do all of that?

Scotti Brackett: Well, I have a great schedule in urgent care, I must say. Not having to work every day is helpful, but I work three days a week. And so really the job, I love my urgent care family and it was a perfect job for me. It has always allowed me to take my son to his therapies and doctor's appointments in the morning, because as many of you know, urgent care doesn't open till noon and we are open till 10:00 PM at night. It gave me the flexible schedule to be able to work one-on-one with my son every single day and still work full-time. And I'm very thankful for that. And it's the job I love as well.

I also want to say, first, thank you guys for your amazing supportive comments. And second of all. I couldn't have done a lot of this without Cathy Cartwright. She has been a big supporter. And for many of these things, I need some kind of a reference. I need some kind of something or someone to say that I'm a legitimate person. And she has always been right there for me as well as my collaborating physician, Holly Austin. They have been amazing supporters always encouraged me. And it was at Academy for Professional Development where I really kind of got to know Cathy Cartwright a little better. And she has always encouraged me, said "Go for it. Go for it. Do it. What else? What are you doing next? How else can I help? What can I do?" I really have appreciated and been grateful for her support as well.

Trisha: She is a huge advocate for our podcast as well and we would not be here to highlight these amazing advanced practice providers if it wouldn't be for Cathy, so we are super blessed to have her in our corner as well. Learning to kind of step out of your typical day and put yourself into the advocacy role takes a lot of time and effort, and it's extremely important.

So thank you so much for being a leader in this area for us, Scotti. For those people wanting to step outside of their day-to-day role, what kind of advice do you have for these ladies and gentlemen that want to advocate, that want to further their career? What type of advice would you have for them?

Scotti Brackett: I would say let it be known and let it be known what your passion is and what you want to advocate for and about. And once you start doing that, then people will start thinking of you and reaching out to you, such as you guys did. You guys thought of me and it's because I'm very vocal about it. And I go around and I talk to everybody and I think that has been my biggest asset in advocacy, is being able to go and start a cold conversation and being comfortable with starting a cold conversation with different people and not being afraid to let them know what you're about.

I think if you can do that, then you can advocate for whatever you want. It's interesting Tobie brought up the RBG quote, because I have always thought that. I have a passion and I needed to learn how to hone that passion and focus it and not just have it be, you know, some crazy lady screaming from the top of the roof necessarily, but how to hone that and find the appropriate pathways. And it has been very personally satisfying for me as well and healing to be able to do this and know that I am actively doing things to improve my son's future and then everybody else with disabilities too.

So my biggest advice is to just go out there, let it be known and talk about it in an appropriate way. And find someone who can support you a hundred percent because you have to have that person in your corner. My husband, I couldn't do any of this without him. Cathy Cartwright, my supporters at work, I couldn't do this without other support. So find your people, find the people to be in your corner, find your pathway and go for it.

Tobie: It's so true, Scotti. I remember when I was so nervous to do this podcast, and I remember Trisha just telling me this quote, she said, "Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes." and it's getting yourself out of your little comfort zone and having people that support you, even if you mess up, even if you say the wrong things, even if you're just learning how to do this whole advocacy thing.

And I think it looks differently for everyone, right? Like you are so blessed to be able to-- you are so talkative, you are outspoken, you are in it, it comes easy to you. And so other people might not come quite as easy, but there are other ways that they can do it as well as long as they have that passion, right? It's just like you need that passion to get started. You need those people in your corner. And I think all of us have it within us. And I think we all chose to be pediatric nurse practitioners or family nurse practitioners or chose this role for a reason because we care and we want to make a difference for people. I think that's the whole reason why we chose this. And so learning how to really step out of our typical day and do something more is really what we're all after. We just kind of need the next steps in figuring out how to do that. So thank you for that advice.

Trisha: Listeners. I hope that this episode reminds you of who you are and all that you have to offer the world. Your voice matters. Find your passion and speak up and out for it. Speak up out and loud, even if your voice shakes.

Scotti, we like to end each episode on a lighter note. Will you share some ways you have taken on the challenge of 2020 other than what we have already talked about, which is huge by the way?

Scotti Brackett: I really think 2020 has brought us together more as a family because we've had so much family time. One of the things that I have done and I've actually gotten quite good at it if I don't say so myself is cooking. I have found cooking to be a new hobby of mine that I really enjoy. And so throughout COVID, I've been basically learning how to cook new things and cooking with my children. And it's been fun, most of the time. Cooking with my children is mostly fun. But that, I think, has been a great outlet for me. Something we can do inside and we all enjoy doing. So I have found something new that I'm good at in 2020 as well.

Tobie: We so appreciate you and are grateful that you agreed to come on this podcast and tell everyone about all the work you have been doing. Oh, I forgot to mention, aren't you thinking about getting your PhD or you're actually pursuing it right now? Oh, just one more thing, Scotti, that you're doing.

Scotti Brackett: Yes. So one more thing, I figured since my son is going to be in kindergarten next year, which is an overwhelming thought. I will have all my children in school. So I figured I should probably go back to school too.

Tobie: Of course. Of course you should.

Trisha: Of course, why not?

Scotti Brackett: Why not? So I am actually applying, I hope to be accepted. I'm applying for my PhD in nursing. Research will focus on equality in healthcare for people with disabilities, specifically access to healthcare for people with disabilities. So I'm excited to hopefully start that next year. I haven't been accepted yet. I hope I'm not jinxing myself.

Trisha: I have no doubt in my mind you're going to get accepted, Scotti. We wish you the best of luck and you're going to do amazing.

Scotti Brackett: Thank you so much, guys. This has been a great experience. I'm so happy that you thought of me when you thought about advocacy. That just made my day.

Tobie: Awesome. Well, thanks Scottie so much. And listeners, thank you guys for tuning in with us today. Our next episode will feature Amy Terreros. So please come listen as we talk with her about her role in the SCAN clinic and her involvement in NAPNAP.

Trisha: If you have a topic that you would like to hear about or you are interested in being a guest on our podcast, please email us at tdobrien@cmh.edu (<mailto:tdobrien@cmh.edu>) or (<mailto:twilliams@cmh.edu>) (<mailto:twilliams@cmh.edu>). Once again, thanks for listening to the Advanced Practice Perspectives podcast.

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