



JOSEPH C. PAVIGLIANITI, MD
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The kid scores again

My wife of 20 years secretly rejoiced when the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* stopped publishing their hard copy version Nov. 30, 2016 (another end of an era, I told my kids), in favor of an online-only edition. Whenever she feels I may not be listening or paying attention to what she is saying, she usually finds my nose buried in the daily paper, pretty much reading it cover to cover (sports first ... this is Pittsburgh, for Pete's sake). She knows I love her with all my heart, but the idea of having to share my limited physical and emotional support presence, not only with our kids, but with a newspaper, sometimes irks her. We had just gotten rid of cable four months earlier, the process of which I could write a separate, multi-volume, stand-alone editorial series about. Suffice it to say that it may be "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," (Matthew 19:23-26), but downsizing cable may be even more difficult, if even unattainable.

While I have not missed the talking heads and political spin, after two months of news deprivation, and craning my neck to catch glimpses of the presidential inauguration on my patients' hospital room televisions, we relented and are back to a hard copy of

the newspaper. Unfortunately, the news has not improved during our self-imposed media blackout. Until today.

I have been searching for some inspiration to write my first editorial for the *Bulletin* for weeks. I knew I wanted to write about the idea of trying to elevate ourselves; to become the extraordinary people that we were intended to become. That has been an idea that has occupied a lot of our family's free time over the last few months, as my oldest child labored through his Common Application for college. Who knew that essays counted so much toward one's future? Describe in 500 words how you have been a leader in the community. In 450 words, describe three things you can do right now to make the world a better place. In 750 words, what makes you "extraordinary?"

Now, my 18-year-old son is a good kid, but I do not think he has had much time to develop into a leader, much less even scratch the surface of being extraordinary. But what about me? I have logged well over 50 years on this planet and am on the downward slope of life. Am I "a leader?" Am I "extraordinary?" Am I the total person that God (or whatever your faith perspective is) wanted me to become? Most importantly, what do I need to do in my

remaining years here on Earth to fulfill "my mission" to have made this world a much better place than I found it? Lately, I have been asking myself that a lot, not always pleased with my own self-review.

I finally found my inspiration, both in the looming deadline for this editorial and in today's sports page of the *Post-Gazette*. I was just paging through when I was greeted with an old photo of a very young Sidney-Crosby signing a yellow plastic duck for a pediatric patient at a charity event. I know the photo well because a copy of it also has hung in our office for many years. My eyes then moved to a much more moving photo of Mr. Crosby, with some of his Penguins teammates, at the bedside of an obviously ill patient at Children's Hospital. Smiles are on everyone's faces, but the biggest grin, actually a look of total glee, is on Crosby himself (great photo, Google it if you get a chance). Sure, many sports stars visit Children's Hospital annually, and that is a really good thing. They don't have to, but they do a world of good in a child's life by turning some of their athletic star power into healing power. I imagine these "visits" as 20-minute meet and greets to try to cheer up a sick child, and then the athletes get back to their own glamorous lives.

Editorial

In "The Unseen Sidney Crosby" article, we are treated to the secret healing life of what Mr. Crosby does afterward: On many occasions, he goes back, after the cameras and journalists have left, and just visits with the child and family. Sometimes, he brings some toys or video games and they just play without the cameras watching. Just him, a sick child, and a very worn out family. No cameras. No obligations. No media spin. No political gain. Just time. Just caring and an immediate love given from his heart to a sick kid. Mr. Crosby is a popular request in the Make-a-Wish world, and he reportedly goes above and beyond when interacting with those who want to meet him, sometimes forging a lifetime friendship. Sometimes, there are multiple visits to the same patient – later, unannounced, in private.

We read of a little Amish boy that Mr. Crosby has taken a particular interest in, but when he returns to visit the child several weeks after their initial encounter, just because he liked him and wanted to visit him again, he discovers that the boy has passed away from cancer. I am sure Mr. Crosby felt a true sense of loss, and my heart aches for him while reading about it.

Throughout the article, we are given myriad examples of when Sidney Crosby actually strikes up friendships with those who can do nothing for him, but he gives of his time, and his heart, quite generously. In pri-

vate. When no one else is watching. This is the "unseen" Sidney Crosby. Quite remarkable for a 29-year-old guy without children himself.

How can I be more like him? Well, if you ever have seen me skate, you know that won't be the answer. But, I have been blessed in my own life – differently, but still abundantly. Faith. Family. Freedom. Happiness. Love. I can grow a real beard. All the ingredients are there. It is up to me to continue to try to give back, unceasingly. There are many injustices in this world that need me. That need all of us. How can I be better? How can we as physicians be better citizens of our communities and this nation? While always trying to improve our world one act at a time, we need look no further than our Pittsburgh ice rink. He shoots. He scores. He gives from his heart. Extraordinary!

Dr. Paviglianiti is a pediatric ophthalmologist and associate editor of the ACMS Bulletin. He can be reached at jcpmd@pedstrab.com.

The opinion expressed in this column is that of the writer and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editorial Board, the *Bulletin*, or the Allegheny County Medical Society.

Reference

"The Unseen Sidney Crosby: He Owns Those Moments," by Jason Mackey, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 12, 2017.

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