

Child Life: an ally for kids

by Amanda Overman

For Rana Post no day is ever typical. As a certified [Child Life](#) specialist and Child Life program coordinator, Post's job is to make a child's hospital experience less traumatic.

Post, along with the two other Child Life specialists at CoxHealth, interacts with a child at several points of the hospital stay. To help calm children's fears before surgery, Child Life throws "pre-op parties." If a child can't attend the party, Post meets them during pre-admission and shows them step-by-step photos of a child on surgery day and familiarizes them with some of the medical equipment. Child Life also

works with parents who wish to accompany their children through certain aspects of surgery. The Child Life specialist can help parents decide if they want to participate and what to expect.

In surgery holding, Post answers questions from children and parents. She also engages the child during surgery preparations.



projects, birthday and holiday parties, pet therapy and visits from Missouri sports teams.

However, Surgery and Pediatrics are not the only departments that rely on Child Life. Other hospital departments call Child Life to assist children who are struggling with a family member's illness or condition, or to help parents understand a child's concerns.

Child Life specialists' background prepares them to handle the many tasks they perform for children and their families every day. A specialist must have a bachelor's degree in an area such as child development, elementary education or psychology and also be certified by the Child Life Council.

Many families are surprised that a program like this is available for free.

"We get thank-you cards all the time," Post says. "People really appreciate what we do."

Amanda Overman is a Public Relations assistant for CoxHealth.

The Cox Child Life program started in 1991. The program is funded by a donation from Cox Auxiliary to [Children's Miracle Network](#). For more information about Child Life services, call 269-6784.

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"We keep the kids focused on something besides what the nurses do," Post says.

Back on the Pediatric unit, Post makes rounds to assess the many needs of the patients and families. She also makes sure there are toys, books, movies and video games for patients. The staff coordinates special art

Child Life specialists Rana Post (holding child) and Sonja Foust engage a young patient in a learning activity. Child Life is a program at CoxHealth that tailors activities to make the hospital stay less intimidating.