

Board Member Q&A: For Amanda Brimmer, board service is personal

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We spoke with Amanda Brimmer, Managing Director & Partner at BCG, who is the mom of a child with a rare genetic disorder.

Overview

We recently welcomed a number of new board members to our [Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford \(ESCGR\) Board](#). We want to give you a better sense of who they are and why they

serve. In this post, we spoke with Amanda Brimmer who is the Managing Director and Partner at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG). She received her BA from Northwestern University and her MBA from the Kellogg School of Business. We spoke with her about being the mom of a child with a rare genetic disorder and how organizations like ESCGR help families like hers.

How did you become acquainted with the work of Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford?

I was originally introduced to the work of Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford in my capacity as a managing director and partner at BCG. When CEO Sara Ray Hallman first came on board, she reached out to BCG to help with strategic planning. I got to know ESCGR and its wonderful programs to support individuals with disabilities and provide early learning in detail. They spoke to me, particularly because I am the mother of four-year-old twins, one of whom has disabilities. My son has a very rare genetic disorder called SETD5 syndrome. Only about 100 children in the world have this disorder. It has many manifestations, but my son physically has very low tone and most children have learning difficulties. We were told at birth that our son was unlikely to be ambulatory without support. We thought for a long time he'd never be able to eat or walk normally. Today, he does both, and he speaks, jokes, and plays. So much of that is because of the services he received early on, many of the kinds of services provided by ESCGR. Early intervention has been tremendously valuable to the development of my family and so when I look at Easterseals' mission, it's just so personal to me. I also know how difficult it can be to navigate being a new parent, never mind a parent to children with challenges. Organizations like Easterseals, which provide support to parents and children of all abilities, is an essential resource for families and communities—particularly for those who are less privileged and resourced than we are.

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How do you hope to use your individual skillset to serve on the ESCGR board?

I have a background in business strategy and helping organizations grow to be more vibrant and successful. ESCGR is at a bit of an inflection point. It has become much more financially solvent and stable in the past two years, so now there's some critical core questions around how we should expand our service capabilities. Should we expand the Easterseals Academy? How do we support individuals with disabilities who age out of our programs? Should we be more focused on employment or lifetime services? What do our families in early learning and in the disability space need most from us? I'd like to be really helpful in thinking through how we expand in a financially responsible way so that our investments have the greatest amount of return for the communities we serve.

What do you wish more people knew about Easterseals serving Chicagoland Greater Rockford? What makes it special?

ESCGR does a lot of great work and I think it is underknown considering all of the expertise and support it brings to the early learning, and autism and disabilities spaces. What makes ESCGR particularly special, in my opinion, is the Easterseals Academy that serves children who are the most difficult to educate but who deserve the highest quality of care and education. ESCGR does this with a great deal of respect, humility, and success. It's also not widely known that ESCGR does much more than serve individuals with disabilities, it does a tremendous amount in the early learning space and in supporting families. I also have to say that the leadership is special. I definitely wanted to join the board because of CEO Sara Ray Hallman and her team. The leadership team is incredibly capable.

You are busy professionally and personally. Why do you give of your time as a board member?

I firmly believe that it is the responsibility of business executives in Chicago to give back civically. For me, with the limited time that I have to engage, I really want to do it on causes that I believe can really make a difference and that hit home for me. ESCGR is definitely that kind of cause.