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A change for the better

Leaving a life in the lab for a career in science communications seems like a far-fetched transition, but it's a leap that Clayton Boldt, Ph.D., knew he had to take if he wanted to follow his heart.

Clayton developed a passion for science as a child and spent his entire academic journey pursuing it. But as he completed his doctorate in genetics, Clayton had a hunch that he wouldn't find his dream job in the field of research. Still, he accepted a postdoctoral opportunity at MD Anderson for the opportunity to contribute to research that could positively impact patients. As a kid growing up in Beaumont, Clayton had always heard amazing stories about MD Anderson and reveled in the idea of joining its workforce.

In August 2013, Clayton became a postdoctoral fellow, researching biomarkers that could be used to predict malignancies. He was also honored to be selected for MD Anderson's Cancer Prevention Research Training fellowship program.

Although the research was new and exciting to him, he couldn't shake off the feeling that he could better serve the science community in a different capacity.

While his colleagues were striving to attain their own research labs, Clayton began exploring other job possibilities. He sought the guidance of a career counselor at MD Anderson, and after taking multiple personality and strengths tests, he noticed they all pointed to the same thing: communications.

Clayton realized that he loved talking about science more than analyzing data and he had a knack for translating complex research into digestible information for a lay audience. With this epiphany, Clayton decided to pursue a career in communications and in 2015 successfully secured a position as a senior communications specialist on MD Anderson's Public Relations team.

It was a challenging decision to change career paths, but he soon found that the Public Relations team was the perfect fit for him. Clayton's background allowed him to effectively convey the impact of the institution's innovative research, and his learning curve focused on communication techniques and PR best practices.

Today, Clayton credits his success to everyone who encouraged him to follow his intuition and grow in a new field. He thinks anyone considering a career shift should explore those possibilities with a mentor, career counselor or someone who can give unbiased advice. Clayton himself makes time to have those conversations with people who are interested in his career journey.

Clayton loves that his career in communications allows him to interact with different people every day, and it offers him the opportunity to help scientists convey their research in a way that excites others about the future. At MD Anderson, that also means giving the gift of hope and good news of progress in its mission to end cancer.

- **Which MD Anderson School(s) did you graduate from and year of graduation?**
 - I started at MD Anderson as a postdoctoral researcher in August 2013 and was honored to be chosen for a fellowship in the Cancer Prevention Research Training Program. In April 2015, I was pleased to accept a position on MD Anderson's Public Relations team, where I have been working ever since.
- **What is your academic area of specialization?**
 - I completed my undergraduate studies at Texas A&M University in Genetics and earned my Ph.D. from The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Genetics & Development.
- **Who is your current employer?**
 - MD Anderson
- **What city do you currently live in?**
 - Houston
- **What is the link to your LinkedIn profile?**
 - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/claytonboldt/>
- **Do you have a website you want to link?**
 - www.mdanderson.org/newsroom
- **Who are your mentors?**
 - I have been fortunate to work with a great team of colleagues and mentors within Public Relations and our division. I've been able to learn a great deal along the way from their expertise, which has really helped make my career transition successful.
- **Significant career accomplishments?**
 - I have been honored to be a part of the Public Relations team for more than 6 years. As a team, we've seen some truly outstanding media stories published about the great work being done at MD Anderson, and I never fail to be impressed by what we can accomplish together.
 - I was also proud to be a part of generating and publishing a consensus statement with all NCI-designated cancer centers in the U.S. to voice support for HPV vaccination as a cancer prevention strategy. This was a monumental effort across many teams but showcased the power of dozens of institutions across the country coming together. For this effort, we were honored with the Excellence in Media Relations award by the University of Texas System.
- **Family?**
 - I have been married to my wonderful wife, Laura, for nearly 12 years. We have two sweet boys – Ryan (6) and Owen (3).
- **Graduate school(s) from which you received a degree(s) and year of graduation?**
 - The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, Dallas, TX – Doctor of Philosophy in Genetics and Development – 2013
- **Undergraduate school(s) from which you received a degree(s) and year of graduation?**
 - Texas A&M University, College Station, TX – Bachelor of Science in Genetics– 2008
- **High school(s) from which you received a degree and year of graduation?**
 - West Brook High School, Beaumont, TX - 2004