



Greener pasture right here at Lincoln Hospital for Cheryl



Despite her new job description at Lincoln Hospital, Cheryl Nelson will always be a nurse first and foremost.

"But I can see the big picture in medicine," says Cheryl, who resigned her post as Acute Care Director of Nursing Services in April. "That big picture is quality and federally mandated programs to ensure quality care."

Administrator Tom Martin agrees. Not only does he know that providing highest quality care is the best way to compete against larger hospitals, he's willing to commit time and personnel to projects such as the 100,000 Lives Campaign, National Patient Safety Goals and CMS Best Practices — all national campaigns to increase quality in medical centers of all sizes.

"We needed someone to be focused on those goals and get us where we need to be," says Cheryl, who was tapped for the assignment. "I just hope I can meet the challenge because it's a big one."

Healthcare consumers, including us all, are not forgiving of poor care. State and federal government and insurance companies know this as well and Cheryl says, there will soon come a time when we are paid by the quality of care we give.

"Pay for performance is coming soon," she says. "There will be national standards for care and if we don't meet those standards, we won't get paid."

That's why Lincoln Hospital is on the cutting edge of creating those quality standards. Already we are a national pilot hospital for heart attack and pneumonia protocols, and Cheryl says this is the tip of the iceberg.

"We can't afford to put these things on the back burner. To survive, we have to be providing top quality before it's mandated."

And who better to help us meet, and exceed these standards than someone with high standards?

"I'm a perfectionist," smiles Cheryl. "And that's a good thing in a medical setting. I want the best for my family and I bring them here. I've always asked the question, 'what would you want for your mom?' Everyone wants the best. We need to provide the best — every time."

In her new capacity, Cheryl will work Monday through Thursday and answer to VP of Clinical Services Marilynn Snider. "I don't know where my office will be, but I have my trusty laptop so I can work wherever there's space."

Cheryl, who has worked at Lincoln Hospital since 1987, is helping in the search for her replacement. "It's a key job. You recruit, hire, fire, counsel employees, provide education, do policy and procedure review, be ready to work the floor as an RN and manage 30 employees who work 24/7. It's a demanding full-time position."

In her new capacity, Cheryl will continue to provide education for nursing staff and assist with the transition to electronic records. "I envision being a 'catch-all' in many ways. This job will evolve with the hospital's needs." Which will be good for Cheryl as she thrives on the creative process.

"That's what I like best — finding creative solutions. Making things happen with limited resources. This hospital is very different today from what it was five years ago. It will be totally different in another five years. I have a positive outlook about where we're going and know that we can give outstanding care."

Spoken like a true RN.