



The right choice – Dietitian Irene Rapp



Growing up in Walla Walla, Washington in the 1960's Irene Rapp didn't see many choices for women.

"Thinking about what I wanted to be when I grew up, there just weren't many options," she says. "In Walla Walla, women were either teachers or nurses."

Knowing that neither of these careers was her calling, Irene sought expert consultation — the college catalogue at WSU.

"I knew I was going to go to college. I knew I wanted to work with people. I liked food and was good at science classes."

The words "Registered Dietitian" jumped right off the page.

A perfect fit for her personality and skills, Irene moved easily into work in food service management upon her graduation. Through the years, she found herself walking different nutrition related roads, including working as a Registered Dietician for a small community hospital in Antioch, California, consulting as a private practitioner, doing diabetes education and managing the liquid weight loss program for Sacred Heart Medical Center.

"Through all this, I found that I really enjoyed the elder population and the challenge that comes along with their special needs," says Irene.

Coming back to private practice consulting, Irene serves a number of long term care facilities, retirement homes and assisted living centers. So how did she come across Lincoln Hospital?

"I saw the advertisement last year, but had a timing conflict. When it came up again in June, I made sure I got my application in."

Already busy with acute care and LTC residents, Irene knows her services are needed here at Lincoln Hospital. As a matter of fact, Irene has a few "tricks" up her sleeve that our community may benefit greatly from — including her own weight loss program.

"I wrote and copyrighted a weight loss program with a couple of RD friends of mine back in the 1980's," she says of the "Successfully Slim" program.

"It is very similar to a Weight Watchers type program because of the food focus and behavior modification. It could be easily updated and reconstructed to meet the needs of the folks here in Lincoln County."

This is good news as Lincoln Hospital's Women's Health Committee has been looking into providing a weight loss program locally.

"We were working with Weight Watchers to come out here for weekly meetings, but it didn't work out," says Lorie Klahn, ARNP. "At that point, we decided to start our own program, but needed a Registered Dietician with a passion and a plan."

Irene has both. She says she is very willing to adapt her "Successfully Slim" program to meet our needs and can incorporate a number of her heart healthy recipes into the proposed program.

"I wrote a cookbook called 'Healthy Cooking on the Run'," she laughs, noting she loves to cook. "It's full of low sugar, low fat, low cholesterol meals that can be made in under an hour."

Implementing this program will take some time and considerable planning and effort, especially as Irene is already busy with weekly patient consultations — her primary responsibility.

"Food plays such a big part in the quality of life for our elders. It helps them enjoy life and even gives them control as they decide what they want, if they want it. It's about choices."

And we're glad Irene has chosen Lincoln Hospital.