There's something about Mary…

You could call Mary Anderson "The Accidental Recreational Therapist."

"I'd never heard of Recreational Therapy before I went to college," admits Mary, Lincoln Hospital's recreation guru. Blame it all on basketball.

You see, Mary was a star basketball player for the Coeur d'Alene High Vikings in the early 1980's. Her skills earned her a two year scholarship to North Idaho College, then another two years at Eastern Montana College where she was forced to declare a major.

"When you're on a basketball scholarship, they send to you to a PE advisor. I couldn't see myself as a PE teacher so the advisor suggested Recreational Therapy."

And when Mary finished school and began working as a rec therapist, she found the job was a good fit for her skills and personality.

"I love it. Your day is never like the day before. There is always something different," she smiles. "I'm always on the move with new people to work with. I like the challenge."

Working with people fighting their way back from a stroke or accident is all the motivation Mary needs to show up each morning.

"I get to help people recover — to improve their quality of life by using the things they *like* to do," she says of the many patients working their way back to independence after a knee replacement or surgery.

"For Long Term Care, the goal is to help the residents keep their quality of life for as long as they can. I help them adapt their physical limitations so they can still pursue those leisure interests that make life worth living."

Mary says those who like to do craftwork are keeping their fine motor skills intact. "They will be able to feed themselves and brush their own hair and teeth longer than someone who doesn't use those hand and arm muscles," she explains.

A Recreational Therapist for Eastern State Hospital for the past 12 years and a Reardan resident for three, Mary found herself at that crossroads. "I kept asking myself if I really wanted to keep doing the same thing. What was I going to do with the second half of my career?"

The answer came in the mailbox.

"I saw the Lincoln Hospital ad in the Lincoln Advertiser. I had never really thought of Lincoln Hospital and didn't really know much about it as I'd always driven east instead of west."

She answered the ad and here she is.

"I really like it here. There are lots of friendly people and lots of variety. I like hearing the stories of the Long Term Care residents and getting to know them. The TCU patients are also fun as I get to help them with their recovery."

When Mary is not here at work, she's shooting hoops, right? Wrong.

"I don't play anymore," she admits. "By the time college was over, basketball was a job and I didn't like it anymore."

Instead of hoops, she shoots guns, loves to hunt, fish and ride horses.

"The largest fish I ever caught was a 10 pound walleye in Lake Roosevelt," she says, pulling a picture from her pocket of a silver fish hoisted high by a smiling blonde in a baseball cap. "I really don't carry that picture with me wherever I go. I just had it in my pocket because I was talking fishing with one of the residents."

Now that's no accident!