



Susanne appreciates life at Lincoln Hospital



For Susanne Gehring, being an Occupational Therapist is a way to reflect on her own life — daily.

“It’s a humbling profession because you see people with so many needs and you realize how much we take our lives and our health for granted.”

What if you could no longer open the ketchup bottle or needed help putting your shoes on? What if the simplest tasks of eating with a spoon or wiping your nose with a tissue were beyond your physical capabilities?

“That’s why I like Occupational Therapy,” says Susanne. “I can make a difference in someone’s daily life by helping them relearn a skill they may have lost due to illness or injury. It’s about quality of life.”

A third generation Seattle-ite, Susanne never dreamed she’d be in Occupational Therapy. She applied for nursing school at UCLA and was accepted, but jumped to OT after an acquaintance told her about a program closer to home.

“It sounded interesting and I decided to turn in an application just to see what would happen,” she says. Her name was among the 15 chosen. “It was serendipitous,” she laughs.

Once in training, she found OT to be the perfect blend of psychology and medicine, which gave her interesting ways to help others.

She ran an industrial rehabilitation and work program in Fresno. “I helped people get into condition to do their jobs and find better ways to accomplish their work.” After that, she ran a hand clinic for people with traumatic hand injuries. “Hand injuries can be totally life changing. We take being able to use our hands for granted.”

But her time at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle is the job that challenged her the most. “I saw the most obscure things that happen to people — unimaginable injuries. Dealing with this on a daily basis changes your life dramatically,” she says. “It puts life in perspective. Life is short. Use your time well.”

Susanne eventually crossed the Cascade Curtain last year after marrying a Spokane man. She is enjoying the variety of work Lincoln Hospital. “Rural medicine is a challenge. I see a lot of different needs in Long Term Care, TCU and Acute Care. It’s been nice.”