



## Stop that blur! Meet Tami French, DNS



Tami French admits it takes some speed to keep up with her.

"I'm pretty fast," she admits of her pace through the Lincoln Hospital halls. "Staff has to be persistent to keep up — and I'm not as Johnny-on-the-spot as I'd like to be."

As the Director of LTC Nursing, the Transitional Care Unit and Vista Manor, Tami oversees not only the long range plan for her departments, she delves into the details of the everyday life of her residents.

"I don't know how I do it all," she laughs. But with her work ethic and persistence, she somehow manages.

"I blame my dad for that. He drove responsibility, dedication and common sense into my brain and now he tells me I work too hard."

Despite her hectic schedule, directing the nursing home is a piece of cake compared to her first career.

"I worked for the state for 18 years dealing with behavioral disorders. I got tired of being beat up," she says frankly. "So in this mid-life crisis, I changed careers and became a nurse."

A Spokane native, Tami had plenty of job opportunities in the city. "But someone told me to 'go rural,' so I did." Despite the 100 mile daily commute, she's never regretted it.

"In a rural facility, the job description is wide and varied. I didn't want to specialize. I wanted to have a lot of experience."

But was Long Term Care her first choice?

"I had no intention of staying with Long Term Care, or going into management for that matter. I just wanted to be a nurse, care for my patients and go home to my family," she admits.

The residents changed her mind.

"Not a lot of people really like or understand geriatrics. I really do. When I got into it, I found out just how medically fragile the population is. People have so many health problems. It's a real challenge to keep them healthy and happy."

With every resident, Tami's goal is to give them back some of what they lost when they moved away from their home.

"Physically, we can help restore people's health to some degree," she says. "But people need more than that. They need to be looked at and dealt with holistically." That's why she's pursued Eden.

"It's all Eden!" she says, comparing life here before Eden to a black and white photograph. "Now, it's color. Not that what we were doing before was bad. I just wouldn't go back. The residents are happier and more involved in their care with Eden. They're not afraid to have relationships. We hear laughter."

And some of that is from the staff, which Tami credits with the program's success.

"We have an awesome, awesome team. There's nowhere in Spokane that has near the bonding and connection we do. We're all here for the same reason — we want to make a difference and make things better for our residents."

According to state auditors, it's working.

"The residents told the last survey team that was out that they love the staff and can't imagine their lives without us here," smiles Tami. "When they see us as part of their family, that's when I know we're doing things right."

And that goes right back to Tami herself.

"I take my residents very personally. I will do whatever it takes for any of them, and I don't just mean medically. I like to bond with them. I'm not much of a paper person. I'm a hands on with the residents person."

Which is why she resisted the DNS position when it was initially offered to her.

"We went through five DNS' while I was working on the floor. I finally said yes because I wanted things to settle down."

With few regrets ("Paperwork!"), Tami says she's here for the duration.

"My favorite part of being here is that I make a difference. I help bring people back to medical stability, and when it's time for them to go, I help make it as peaceful and dignified as I can," she says with a smile. "This job brings me a lot of satisfaction."

Does that mean the faster you work, the more satisfaction you get? "I hope so."