

THE Importance of Caring

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my journey into health care



Joanna Jarecke, BSW
 MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKER

Growing up, Joanna Jarecke knew the medical field had something unique to offer. While her career path changed from what she initially imagined, she knew her calling was to work in health care.

Jarecke grew up in Silver Creek, Nebraska, approximately a half-hour southwest of Columbus. After graduating high school, she attended the University of Nebraska-Kearney, where she received her Bachelor of Social Work degree.

“I have always been interested in the medical field,” she said. **“When I first attended college, my degree was in nursing, but I later switched my major to social work with the goal of working in health care as a social worker. I really couldn’t see myself working anywhere else.”**

After receiving her degree in social work, Jarecke moved to Columbus and accepted a position as a medical social worker with Columbus Community Hospital in April 1989. She is very proud that she has been working in the hospital in the same position for 33 years.

In her role as a medical social worker, Jarecke helps families with a wide variety of needs. She works with the hospital’s case managers to help patients and their families with discharge plans, connects single mothers to resources they may

need, and provides support and crisis intervention to the emergency department by responding to all patient codes and level 1 traumas.

“To sum up a typical day as a social worker would be impossible because every day is different,” she said.

While this variety allows Jarecke to work with many different departments throughout the hospital, she is fortunate to have stayed with the same co-worker and supervisor for most of her career.

With a career spanning more than 30 years, it’s not a secret that Jarecke has built various connections with co-workers throughout the facility. But her ties to the hospital extend beyond collegial relationships. Jarecke’s husband, Tom, joined the Columbus Community Hospital Foundation board of directors in 2014 and has two years remaining on the board. Her daughter-in-law Kellie works as a nurse in the hospital’s acute care and intensive care unit.

Jarecke said she is thankful for the growth opportunities she has received from the hospital over the years. Whether it’s her interest in local community groups, continuing education or the Society of Nebraska Social Work Leaders in Healthcare, she knows she can count on the hospital’s support.

“There are so many great opportunities in health care for anyone interested in the field, especially with the predicted nursing shortage,” she said. **“There are a variety of resources available for people considering nursing school.”**

In her free time, Jarecke and her husband enjoy being outdoors boating and riding their four-wheelers in the summer. She also likes spending time with her four grandchildren and is heavily involved with her church.

To learn more about career opportunities available at the hospital, visit columbushosp.org.