

THE Importance of Caring

JANUARY 2019

my journey into health care



Cheryl Tira

DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Cheryl Tira, director of Information Systems at Columbus Community Hospital (CCH), didn't set out to have a career in health care. But over the course of her career, she's worked in three hospitals in three states – Nebraska, Kansas and Minnesota.

“Once I got started in a hospital environment, I never looked anywhere else. It just felt like this was where I was meant to be,” she said.

Though the majority of Tira's jobs have been in hospitals, when Tira took a correspondence course in computer programming in high school, she didn't think this is where it would lead her.

After taking that correspondence course, Tira went to Kansas City for three months to do hands-on computer programming. That experience led to her first job in health care at St. Mary's Hospital in Manhattan, Kansas. Thanks to her experience with computers, Tira was hired to help St. Mary's implement their first computer system.

Over the years, Tira took additional accounting and computer programming courses while she worked in Kansas and later, Minnesota.

Following her work in Manhattan, Tira went to Cambridge Memorial Hospital in Cambridge, Minnesota to help start their Information Technology (IT) department and implement new software.

Tira was also instrumental in the develop-

ment of CCH's hospital's IT department when she started working here in 1997.

“In each of the hospitals I have worked in, IT was not even a thing when I started,” Tira said. **“It has been challenging and rewarding to implement new technology at each site. I have enjoyed building IT departments in Minnesota and here in Columbus. I would have to say that watching this department grow into what it is now is the thing that I will always be proudest of.”**

In her role as CCH's director of Information Systems, Tira oversees the daily operations of the Information Systems department and plans and prioritizes computer software and hardware projects for the entire organization. She also handles managerial duties related to staffing and budgeting for the department.

In her other role as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) security officer, Tira oversees CCH's annual HIPAA-required Security Risk Assessment and makes plans to address any deficiencies found in that assessment.

With her various roles and responsibilities, Tira said there's no typical day for her at work – but she knows that whatever the day throws at her, she can handle it with the help of her staff.

“If I have a plan for the day, then what I can plan on is it not happening,” she said. **“The one thing I can count on is my staff. They are all very smart, talented and dedicated employees, not just to CCH as**

a whole, but to each other and the department. They are a great group.”

Tira appreciates the support of her team and the support of the hospital's leadership. She said CCH has always had a commitment to IT and hospital leaders have allowed her to implement new programs and systems and hire the staff she needs to manage them.

“We have embraced technology ahead of larger hospitals in our area,” she said. **“To me, it feels as if CCH has always been ahead of the curve in many ways, especially considering our size.”**

Tira is glad she ended up in a hospital the size of CCH, because she said it provides her and her staff with plenty of variety.

“None of my staff have only one thing that they are responsible for,” she said. **“There are many things that we all have to know and the variety is interesting. I would say that if you want variety in an IT job, then smaller hospitals would be a great place to be.”**

Though Tira didn't set out to have a career in health care and she doesn't see herself as having a health care job in the traditional sense, she understands the importance of IT in health care today.

“In this day and age, I'm not sure what health care would look like without IT,” she said.

To learn more about Columbus Community Hospital and how it uses technology to provide high quality health care, visit www.columbushosp.org.