

THE Importance of Caring

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my journey into nursing



Nicole Blaser, MSN, RN
 DIRECTOR OF QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE

It was just supposed to be an after-school job – but it would lead to a career.

Nicole Blaser, MSN, RN, was just 15 when she started working in the medical records department of her local medical clinic. When a staff member in the clinic's lab got sick, Blaser learned how to draw blood so she could help out.

It was Blaser's first hands-on experience in health care and she never looked back.

"I think I had an early experience that showed me the significant role that health care providers play in people's lives and the opportunities they have to make a difference," Blaser said. **"I've always wanted to help people, so seeing that firsthand at a young age, I don't think I ever considered a career outside of health care."**

Following her high school years at the clinic, Blaser would go on to nursing school. She got an associate degree in nursing from Central Community College in Grand Island – and while she was finishing up her last semester, she started working at Columbus Community Hospital (CCH).

Blaser went on to get a bachelor's degree from Midland Lutheran College in 2010 and a master's degree in nursing with a focus on nursing administration and leadership from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 2014.

She is now the director of Quality and Compliance at CCH – a facility where she has worked for 20 years.

Over the course of her career, Blaser has worked as a nurses' aide and then nurse in various CCH departments, and for an outside home health agency and nursing home. She has also served as coordinator for CCH's Skilled Nursing Unit and its joint replacement program.

Thanks to her experience in various CCH departments, Blaser was well prepared for her current position that works with staff throughout the hospital.

Blaser and her staff are responsible for ensuring CCH's patients receive the highest quality patient care. That means, on a typical day, Blaser and her staff could be working with medical staff to improve processes, preparing the facility for a survey by an outside accrediting body or helping a hospital department work through a problem they've identified.

"Really a lot of our job is building organizational capacity for improvement," Blaser said. **"It's about teaching people how to use process improvement methods to make things better and giving them the tools to go out there and do that in their own work."**

Because quality and compliance touch all areas of the hospital, Blaser and her staff see a lot of variety in their work.

"I think that's the best thing about this department. We don't have to do the same thing every day and we're certainly never bored," Blaser said. **"We always have something new to keep us motivated."**

In addition to the variety it provides, Blaser also loves her job because it

allows her to solve problems. Blaser discovered this love for problem-solving while working at a nursing home during nursing school. At the time, the nursing home had a patient who kept falling out bed in the night and Blaser was tasked with helping address the issue.

"We had to identify what we could do to prevent the patient from being harmed and I just loved being part of the solution," Blaser said. **"I'm not sure I knew it at the time, but I think I've always been driven to look for improvement and make things the best they can be."**

Blaser enjoys that aspect of her current position the most and she enjoys the support she has received from CCH. The hospital provided her with financial support when she went back to school for her bachelor's and master's degrees and also gave her flexibility in her work hours so she could go to class or clinicals.

CCH's leadership and staff have also supported Blaser in her daily work.

"In my job as the quality director, I don't feel like I'm ever fighting for resources or help when I need it, because everyone's willing to give that without question," she said. **"Without a doubt, all of the administration, leaders and really everyone at CCH is 100 percent committed to providing the highest quality and safest care to our patients."**

To learn more about Blaser or how CCH works to provide high quality patient care, visit www.columbushosp.org.