

THE Importance of Caring

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my journey into nursing



Jody Willison, RN, BSN
DIRECTOR OF HOME HEALTH AND HOSPICE

Like many teenagers right out of high school, Jody Willison wasn't sure what she wanted to do. Thankfully, that didn't stop her from ending up right where she belonged – at Columbus Community Hospital (CCH).

Jody Willison, RN, BSN, is now the director of CCH's Home Health and Hospice. However, this position is a long way from where she started – with a major in dental hygiene.

“I feel like a lot of kids graduate and are forced to make a decision on what they want to do for the rest of their life...and I felt like when I decided to major in dental hygiene, I just honestly didn't have a good feel for what I wanted to do,” she said.

She started as an LPN at CCH's Home Health and Hospice in 2000. In her 18 years with CCH, Willison has spent 17 of them in Home Health and Hospice. She's worked in the department as an LPN, RN, office manager, and now director.

Willison eventually dropped her dental hygiene major and switched to the nursing track instead. She would go on to qualify for her LPN through Southeast Community College in Lincoln, then an associate's degree of nursing at Central Community College-Columbus and finally at bachelor's degree from Wesleyan.

Willison oversees a staff of more than a dozen people in Home Health and

Hospice, including a social worker, office staff, RNs and CNAs.

Through their hospice program, Willison and her staff work with patients who have a life-limiting illness. They focus on providing comfort for patients and families, rather than a cure.

The department's home health program works with patients who are home-bound or are unable to leave their homes without extensive physical effort. These patients are often referred to home health after surgeries or upon receiving new diagnoses. Willison's staff teaches these patients new skills to help them adapt to their situations. For example, they may teach a patient how to check their blood sugar and administer insulin or follow a home exercise program.

Willison does the scheduling for the Home Health and Hospice staff and patients, handles the department's budget, receives referrals, and occasionally is fortunate to see patients. **“It's a little bit of everything,”** she said. Willison enjoys the variety.

She also appreciates how well she is able to get to know her patients in home health. People are often surprised Willison is able to remember a patient she saw 10 or 15 years ago, but she said that's easy to do when you spend so much time with someone, particularly in their own home. You make a connection it's not easy to forget.

Willison has made similar connections with her staff. **“I have worked here so long, that this has become my family,”** she said. **“I spend a lot of time with these ladies so this is definitely my home away from home.”**

Though Willison enjoys her time at work, she also appreciates how much CCH values their employees' home lives as well.

“I like their flexibility. They realize that people have families and they encourage that,” she said. **“They're real cognizant that everybody has a life outside of work and they really support that work life balance.”**

At home, Willison's family appreciates this balance too.

“My boys are very comfortable with knowing that mom has to go to work, gets called away, because they know that what I'm doing is making a difference,” she said.

Though Willison may not have started out wanting to be a nurse, she knows she made the right decision all those years ago. Willison said she now knows this is what she was meant to do.

To learn more about Willison, or the services offered through CCH's Home Health and Hospice, visit www.columbushosp.org.