

THE Importance of Caring

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my journey into health care



Angie Ramaekers

DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTEER AND GUEST SERVICES

Angie Ramaekers, director of volunteer and guest services at Columbus Community Hospital (CCH), hadn't planned on a career in health care. Her work background was primarily in business before an experience she had as a patient led her to consider the impact she could have in the health care field.

"I had an experience that made me want to make sure the experiences of our patients and visitors are the top priority," she said. **"The health care is expected. It's expected that we have highly trained, highly educated health care professionals, but that's only one part of the puzzle – an important piece – but one piece. The rest of the experience, how you felt about it, is what makes or breaks the patient experience."**

Ramaekers knows the importance of positive hospital experiences – having been in a difficult position as a patient herself. When Ramaekers' second child, a son, was born at CCH, he had to be sent to Children's Hospital & Medical Center in Omaha. Having just had a cesarean section, Ramaekers couldn't go along. She was stuck in the hospital alone, on a clear liquid diet, while her husband went to Omaha with her son and her other relatives were unavailable.

This experience would go on to influence Ramaekers' work when she was hired as a volunteer services and auxiliary coordinator at CCH in July 2009. It would also influence her work when she became

director of volunteer and guest services in May 2017.

"In the areas that I oversee, we don't touch patients. We don't provide patient care," Ramaekers said. **"But we are making sure our patients, visitors and the rest of our staff have the best possible experience at this hospital."**

In her position as director of volunteer and guest services, Ramaekers oversees CCH's volunteer and VolunTEEN programs, the gift shop, vending services, VIP: Very Important Patient valet parking, as well as all the CCH fundraisers that are not held by the CCH Foundation.

In the gift shop, Ramaekers and her team provide customer service, develop and implement new product lines, and do many of the other tasks associated with retail. In her role overseeing the volunteer and VolunTEEN programs, Ramaekers and her staff do recruitment, orientations and trainings for the hospital's more than 200 volunteers. Ramaekers' work with fundraising requires her and her team to organize between 10 and 13 fundraisers a year. This is in addition to the work Ramaekers does to oversee the hospital's valet parking and vending services – which were both introduced in 2018.

In each of these roles, Ramaekers has been well supported by CCH. She was able to get a business degree using CCH's tuition reimbursement program, but just as importantly, Ramaekers said the hospital supports her as a person.

"I have really appreciated that the hospital allows me to be creative. They let me take some wild ideas and massage those ideas until they go from wild to do-able," she said. **"The hospital has allowed me to be a person, so that I can make a mistake and that's okay because I can learn from those mistakes."**

Ramaekers also appreciates the friendly working environment at CCH, where it feels like everyone is part of a team.

"In this organization, we are a family. We rally around each other when there's hardships personally or professionally and we cheer each other on when there are great successes to be shared," she said.

CCH is so much like a family, that Ramaekers said her daughter – who is a high school senior – is considering coming to work there herself one day.

"I think that that's probably one of the best compliments that I can get, or that we as an organization can get, is when somebody's child wants to work at the same place as mom or dad works, not because they have to, not because they're forced into it, but because they want to," she said.

For more information on Ramaekers and CCH's efforts to create positive experiences for patients, visitors and staff, visit www.columbushosp.org.