

An Up and Coming Direct Care Worker Advocate!



Name: Diane Frerichs,
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Hometown: Estherville,
Iowa

A few words about my work: I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant at the Good Samaritan Center in Estherville for 19 years. I work as a Restorative Aide on a part-time basis and am a CNA mentor.

Recent accomplishments: I was named the 2003 CNA of the Year for the Good Samaritan Society. I was also named to the IHCA's 2003 Excellence in Long Term Care "Dream Team" as their CNA of the Year. This recognition was wonderful, but I wish each CNA could feel that good about the work that they do each day. Being named to the ICA Direct Care Worker Advisory Council last year was also an honor. I have met so many wonderful people through the ICA.

My first job: My first jobs were babysitting,

detasseling corn and walking beans. My first job as a caregiver is my current job at Good Sam.

My favorite part of caregiving: My favorite part would have to be the sharing. I love to hear the stories about their lives, their families, and their work. In turn, I love to share with them my life. We are the only family many of them have left or maybe they are only able to visit once or twice a year. That sense of family is pretty special.

The toughest part of caregiving: The toughest part would have to be watching someone you have known a long time, go through the many stages of dementia. It sure makes us appreciate our own lives as they are.

Something I'd like to change about the caregiving industry: I would like everyone to know just what we do. I think it is a given that we have one of those jobs that most people think they can't do. But they don't realize that we don't just care for their physical needs. We give emotionally and spiritually as well. Better health care benefits would also help to retain good staff.

How caregiving will change in the next decade: Our field is constantly changing. We have to remain flexible and open-minded. It is my hope that society will realize the job that we do, and that wages and benefits will increase so that we can attract many more caregivers to our profession. And that each caregiver can leave their job each day and feel good that

they have done the best job they could.

What advice would you give to employers about what they need to do to find and keep direct care workers? Be their biggest fan! You need to be part of their support system. Give them an opportunity to vent, provide them with educational opportunities, and work to keep good staff through better wages and health care benefits.

Something else I'd like to accomplish: I would like every caregiver to know just how special they are! And in turn, I would like to see the public educated as to just what we do before they need us in their own lives.

Someone I admire: My mom. She had cancer about 5 1/2 years ago and has an amazing attitude. Through her faith and the power of prayer she has beat all odds. She always has a hug to share.

Outside interests: My family, stock car racing, quilting, crocheting, and gardening.

About my family: My husband Daryl and I have been married 25 years. We have three children: Chris, Angie, and Mandy. We have 4 grandchildren. My family is truly my life and I thank God for them and the support they have given me in my chosen career.

Favorite vacation spot: The Black Hills.