

Kathy Johnson oral history

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CC: My name is Christian B Cannon nurse at UNCW we are currently in Wilmington North Carolina and It is October 28th

CC: We are doing nursing interview for public health association conference and this is Kathy Johnson

CC: How are you Kathy

KJ: Fine how are you

CC: Good

CC: Um Kathy where were you born

KJ: I was born in Sampson county in North Carolina

CC: Okay and is that where you grew up

KJ: that's where I grew up

CC: the majority of your life

CC: Awesome why did you decide to become a nurse

KJ: Um basically all during my life I was a care giver of sorts we had multiple family members with a different type of a medical problem my father was a severe diabetic I had a grand father who had a stroke at the age of 51

CC: Ok

KJ: So I grew up being an unofficial caregiver and it was just natural to go into nursing

CC: What type of nursing do you do

KJ: I am a public health nurse

CC: Okay and have you always done public health nursing

KJ: No when I graduated nursing school I went to hospitals for about 3 years before I went into public health nursing

CC: okay Kathy why did you decide to become a community health nurse

KJ: Um I was at the hospital okay wait a minute can we stop just a second

CC: Yup

KJ: Okay Kathy what attracted you most to nursing

KJ: I um just grew up with it un officially like I said had lots of members of my family that were sick and I was an un official caregiver almost my entire life

CC: Where and when did you go to nursing school

KJ: I went to Sampson Community College and I graduated in the early 90's

CC: okay please tell me a little bit about your nursing education especially how it relates to community of public health

KJ: Got very little community health education in nursing school I went through the ADM program it is mostly clinicals or was when I was going um so we got mostly hospital based nursing with very little emphasis on community health nursing

CC: Okay so why did you decide to become a community health nurse

KJ: Okay um I was working at the hospital and became a single mom and I have six children and I needed a day job a friend of mine who had been working at the hospital went to work at our local health department and there was a position open she called and told me that there was a position open and so I went in and interviewed got the job thinking I was only going to stay because what I thought I was looking for was either home health or a doctors office and once I got there I absolutely fell in love with my job

CC: Wonderful please tell me about your job in community health

KJ: I was the communal disease/ TB nurse and I was dealing with a lot of TB clients in that county and with a little bit of communal disease clients

CC: okay what is your current position

KJ: I am director of nursing of my health department

CC: Wonderful Okay please tell me about your most remember able community health nursing this can be a time when you made a significant contribution to your community or people with in your community or a time when something went horribly wrong or something surprising that happened to you as a community health nurse

KJ: I am going to tell y'all a funny story or at least we think it is a funny story um we had about a couple years ago a health law violator a TB health law violator that we actually had to end up putting in jail the judge ordered him to stay in jail until he was no longer infectious and then he would be allowed back out in the community as long as he continued his TB treatment as part of his punishment the judge order the patient that he could not drink any alcohol during his entire treatment and that if he did he would personally put him in prison up to the full two years required by state law he was held in um jail until he was no longer infectious and then he was released first thing he did as soon as he got out of jail was go have a drinking party to celebrate his being released from jail came in the next day with a rash telling us that he had a rash because of his medicine found out he had been drinking several of the staff talked to him not so nicely that the judge had ordered that he could go back to jail for entire two years if he did not stop drinking I was included in this he came back the next day with a rash gone informing us we had scared the rash off of him and that we would never ever have to worry about him drinking again and he didn't he didn't drink he turned his life around when we first got him he was a migrant worker was homeless worked just enough to afford his alcohol and that was it today he no longer drinks he has joined a church found a job a place to live and is actually a solo singer in the church he is attending now he credits us with all that good that has happened to him

CC: Wow that's wonderful so Kathy if you had to do it again would you be a community health nurse why or why not

KJ: I definitely would I enjoy it it's one job that I have done that I have felt like I made a difference in the community and I know I made a difference everyday in what we do we can prevent problems for people and then we are there to help when problems do occur

CC: Okay Is there anything else that you would like to share with nurses in the future that are interested in community health nursing in 2010

KJ: Its wonderful wonderful job you would never be disappointed in the job you get help in all ways you get to be more then just a nurse you are an advocate teacher you are a nurse you are caring you are giving and it is an excellent job

CC: Wonderful thank you very much

KJ: you are welcome

Kathy