

Jennifer McCracken oral history

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JT: My name is Juliette Tinney I am a student nurse from UNCW we are in Wilmington, North Carolina and it is October 28th, 2010, and these are nursing interviews for the public health association conference. Good morning.

JM: Good morning.

JT: What is your name?

JM: My name is Jennifer McCracken.

JT: And where were you born?

JM: I was born in Birmingham, Alabama.

JT: And where did you grow up?

JM: I grew up in Hickory, North Carolina.

JT: Tell me why you decided to become a nurse.

JM: I decided to become a nurse because I wanted to help people, I know that sounds cliché and so many people say that, but it's truly the main reason I wanted to become a nurse.

JT: Where and when did you go to nursing school?

JM: I went to nursing school beginning in 1992 and graduated in 1997 from UNC Chapel Hill School of Nursing.

JT: Tell me a bit about your nursing education especially as it relates to community and public health.

JM: Well when I started nursing school I was one of the few that did not want to work in a hospital when I graduated. Even though once I graduated I did a year stint in the hospital. I knew starting out that I wanted to work in public health and as I was going through nursing school I tried to get all of my rotations and clinicals and that sort of thing geared towards public health.

JT: So why did you decide to become a community health nurse?

JM: I felt like you could really impact somebody's health for the long term that way, I was really interested in primary prevention and public health and their emphasis was certainly right in line with primary prevention and I thought it was a good fit.

JT: Tell me about your first job in community health.

JM: My first job in Community Health was at Catawba County Public Health. I started as the nurse for all of the child care centers, so that was a lot of fun getting to do education to preschoolers as well as their families and teachers, and how to prevent being sick and also on other health and safety issues.

JT: And what is your current position?

JM: Now I am a health services manager for Catawba County Public Health, it is a Director of Nursing position.

JT: Tell me your most memorable story about Community Health Nursing.

JM: My most memorable story usually goes back to when I was a student at UNC Chapel Hill. One of our projects for our community health rotation was for us to go into a childcare center and teach children how to wash their hands and I remember thinking "How does this relate to what I'm doing? How does this relate to the class I'm taking, and how much of an impact is this really going to make?" You know just a few years later there I was in my full time job teaching hand washing to a group of preschoolers in Catawba County, and I thought wow this really is nursing and this really is public health and so it kind of came full circle to me to truly understand that prevention starts, not as an adult, but as a very young child. So I think that is a very rewarding thing about public health nursing, you can start when they're very young and teach prevention and then you

can also start when the adults are very old and teach prevention messages as well, that's a really memorable event for me in public health.

JT: If you had to do it again would you be a community health nurse?

JM: Absolutely

JT: Is there anything else you would like to share with the nurses in the future who are interested in community health nursing in 2010?

JM: The future is wide open for nursing and for public health, it certainly is a very rewarding field to go into and you can do so many different things with public health and if you want variety and you want to be in this field, it's something different every single day. Public health is definitely a great field to be in.

JT: Great, thank you so much!

JM: Thank you.