

THE Importance of Caring

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my journey into health care



Mary Jo "Mitch" Shemek

CHAPLAIN

Mary Jo "Mitch" Shemek's career has been focused on helping others.

"I've spent a majority of my working years in a 'helping' capacity in one role or another," she said.

Shemek has a bachelor's degree in general studies from the University of Nebraska Omaha, and her primary area of study was religious studies and education.

Over the course of her career, Shemek has worked as a youth outreach worker at the Archdiocese of Washington, DC; a social service worker at Region IV Services in O'Neill and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services in Norfolk; a support staff member at Behavioral Health Services; and a support staff member and provisionally licensed drug and alcohol counselor at Catholic Charities in Columbus.

Though Shemek enjoyed this work, she would go on to find a job that was an even better fit for her.

"Once I job shadowed with a chaplain in Yankton, I knew in my heart I had discovered what I was meant to do," she said. **"It is a privilege and an honor to walk with others in times of spiritual need."**

Inspired by this experience, Shemek started working as a chaplain in 2004 after beginning her studies in clinical pastoral education at Avera Health Care in Yankton, South Dakota. She has since served as chaplain at Franciscan Care Services in West Point, AseraCare Hospice in Norfolk and Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton.

Shemek became Columbus Community Hospital's first chaplain in October 2020. She works for the hospital four days a week, sharing her time, as needed, at the main hospital campus and working with Home Health and Hospice staff and patients.

In her position as chaplain, Shemek's role is to meet the diverse spiritual care needs of patients, visitors and staff. She provides spiritual care and emotional support for staff, patients and patients' families; facilitates visits and connects patients with their pastors, if requested.

Shemek is a member of the Catholic church, but she is nondenominational in her ministry. She and her husband, Gene, have been married for 20 years and live on a farm between Tarnov and Platte Center. The couple have one son, who is married, and two grandchildren.

Though Shemek hadn't planned on working in health care, she is happy to be in her new position as CCH's chaplain. She encourages other people interested in working in health care to: **"Listen to your heart, work with your strengths. Ask God for guidance."**

For more information on Shemek or how CCH is working to care for the well-being of its staff during COVID-19, visit www.columbushosp.org.