

Nurse practitioner joins GFP staff

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Returning home in residence and practice is important to Kristen (Rowan) Rickertsen.

Rickertsen, a 1989 graduate of Gothenburg High School, will join the staff at Gothenburg Family Practice on Nov. 4 as an advanced practice registered nurse or nurse practitioner.

She will be supervised by Dr. Carol Shackleton.

The difference between a nurse practitioner and a physician's assistant has to do mostly with education, Rickertsen said.

Nurse practitioners must complete a four-year college degree as a registered nurse with at least five years of experience before pursuing a three-year master's program in nursing.

She noted that the job description for both is basically the same.

Rickertsen graduated with a registered nursing degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 1993 and received her master's in nursing from UNMC in 2009.

She practiced, mostly in critical, cardiac, pre-operative, post-operative and outpatient surgery and gastroenterology in hospitals in Kearney, Lincoln and Omaha for 13 years. Her speciality is family practice.

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After working in a health center in Cherokee, OK, for two years, she and her family moved to Gothenburg in 2011 and Rickertsen started working for the Callaway District Hospital and Clinic.

“My nursing background has taught me to look at patients holistically,” Rickertsen said, adding that family practice allows her to treat patients and see outcomes as opposed to some specialty practices where that isn’t always the case. “The body is like a puzzle and you try to put the pieces together to correctly diagnose and treat the patient with the best outcome.”

As far as challenges in the healthcare field, Rickertsen said changes in healthcare coverage will bring an influx of patients into the medical system.

“I think having insurance is good and it will increase the need for more family practitioners,” she said, noting that the challenge will be having enough family practitioners to see patients.

Rickertsen is married to Jarrid Rickertsen (who is also a Gothenburg native), an electrician, and the couple have three children: Faith, 17; Iva, 8; and Blake, 5.

Once she starts her new job, Rickertsen’s office hours will be Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., with Wednesdays off.

Shackleton said she was glad to have Kristen join the staff because she’s from Gothenburg and knows people and their family connections.

“And she’s willing to take the time necessary to address people’s problems,” Shackleton said.

Shackleton said the addition of Rickertsen will be helpful since many people are concerned about the departure of family physician Dr. David Hult whose last day in the office is Oct. 30.

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“For a long time, Dr. Hult was the only doctor at Gothenburg Family Practice,” she explained. “For some, the trauma of changing doctors might be unsettling.”

With a doctor shortage nationwide, Shackleton added that the national trend is toward more mid-level care performed by nurse practitioners and physician’s assistants

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