



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

A familiar face to cardiac rehab patients at Chase County Community Hospital is the hospital's 2013 Caring Kind Employee.

Nominated by one of her peers, Cindy Arterburn, R.N., will represent the local facility at the Oct. 25 awards luncheon in Omaha as part of the Nebraska Hospital Association's annual convention.

The director of Chase County Community Hospital's Cardiac Rehab Unit will be one of 70-plus Caring Kind Employees honored in October after being chosen for the honor by individual hospitals across Nebraska.

Arterburn has been a Chase County Community Hospital Employee for 26 years, but has been a Registered Nurse (R.N.) for 36 years.

A native of Omaha, she grew up just a few blocks from the College of St. Mary's, where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) in 1977.

Her first job as an R.N. was at Omaha's Clarkson Hospital near the University of Nebraska Med Center on the neurology floor. She worked there a year, then moved to the hospital's recovery room where she assisted post-anesthesia patients.

In Omaha, she met Chase County native John Arterburn, who was working as an ag loan officer at a bank in the city. They married in 1979 and moved to Lamar in 1982, where John returned to the family farm.

Cindy's first position in this area was at Melissa Memorial Hospital in Holyoke, Colo., where she worked for several years in a variety of positions, including floor nurse and surgery recovery with Dr. Jim Schiefen.

But it was her occasional work at the cardiac rehab unit there that led to her position in Imperial.

"I really liked it," she said of her introduction to the cardiac rehab work.

She started work at Chase County Community Hospital in 1987, first as a recovery room nurse. But, she then was instrumental in starting the Cardiac Rehab Unit here, and it became a reality in August 1988 with the help of P.A. Mike Grutsch and Dr. Rainwater, a cardiologist from Denver.

With just a couple of patients when the unit started 25 years ago, it is now a big part of the hospital with an average of 25 to 30 patients served three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The unit Arterburn oversees is for anyone who's undergone open heart surgery, any heart procedure or stent implant, she said.

Most insurance companies and Medicare cover cardiac rehab expenses for three months, three days a week, she noted, but after that, many patients here choose to continue their rehab maintenance on a private-pay basis.

It helps, she said, that the hospital charges just \$3.50 per visit after the three-month period.

"We have several in our group who have been coming for 10 years," she said.

"Their group becomes family to them," she added.

The patients work in groups, usually with four to six in each, strengthening their heart muscle and controlling blood pressure.

"That helps them get back to the things they enjoy in life," she said.

While the patients use the various pieces of heart-strengthening equipment, Arterburn said they also visit about diet, use of medications and other issues that can positively affect heart health.

Arterburn's duties also include administration of stress tests each Tuesday, another program started with her urging.

In her Caring Kind Employee nomination, co-worker Linda Nelson wrote, "Cindy has the unique ability to establish a rapport with her newly diagnosed heart patients and can encourage those who are reluctant to change and see the value in exercise."

She added, "Cindy's constant attention to detail and sincere heart ease the fear and uncertainty of those lives she touches."

The Arterburns have three grown sons and a grandson. Pete and wife Lindsey, and five-month-old grandson Grant, live in Frisco, Texas; Paul is in Denver as is his fiancée Katelyn; while Tom farms and ranches in Imperial.