***dsm magazine***

Mariann Clark started off as a nurse, but despite my 37 years practicing in Des Moines I have no recollection of her nursing career. Instead, she has always been the impeccably-dressed, ever-poised, slight woman with the smallest office in Iowa Methodist. The office, likely a converted janitor’s closet, is situated at the intersection of the main east-west and north-south hallways on the first floor. It is the ideal post for her position as “physician-recruiter”—virtually everyone in the hospital walks by her office on a regular basis and are reminded by her ever-open door of her role and availability.

From this tiny nest and this petite woman have come decades of outsized influence—she has been involved in the recruitment and on-going maintenance of hundreds of central Iowa physicians over nearly two generations.

Ms. Clark will take a phone call from any office or physician. She always extends her hand and skills to help. She knows the landscape, the offices, the physicians, the office managers, the administrators, the nurses. She knows the needs and wants and the whereabouts of resources to help. She is generous with her time—as with realtors, evenings, weekends and holidays are her working hours, when the clients are visiting on site.

Although her formal title is “physician-recruiter”, a more apt description would be “physician placer”. For while she has always recruited for Methodist, now Unity Point, she apparently recognizes that placing a good physician in Des Moines is more important than placement in any specific venue. In a very real sense the recruit is her client, not the institution.

This is a tough job, requiring focused social skills and wide experience. Dealing with young doctors just out of training can be difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating. And this is where her years as a nurse continue to be so very important—she knows how to size them up, sound out their preferences and concerns, and patiently provide words of support and even guidance. Her involvement has been the deal-maker for many physicians amongst us today.

And it is not just the newly-minted physicians. Ms. Clark is a competent and available counselor to physicians at any point in their career. She has seen it all—changes in the economy of medicine, personal mishaps, shifting alliances, mergers and splits, burnout and recovery. She is a discreet advisor and confidant to many. Administrators come and administrators go, but Mariann Clark is always there.

And she is still there.

She is certainly a sage, and likely over seventy. Hence, my recommendation of Mariann Clark, R.N. as a *dsm magazine* Sage over 70.

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