

Member Spotlight

Darlene A. Dougherty, MS, RD, LD

The Public Health/Community Nutrition Practice Group (PHCNPG) is pleased to recognize Darlene A. Dougherty for 50 years of membership in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics!



After graduating from the University of Idaho, Darlene completed her dietetic internship at Walter Reed Army Medical Center during the Vietnam War. Her instructors were called to Vietnam about six months into the internship, so Darlene and her internship class had to fill positions vacated by higher-level officers. Her first assignment was Clinical Dietitian for the Officer Wards. She stayed at Walter Reed for two years where she had the opportunity to work with implementation of the ingredient room and the computerized management system.

After leaving Walter Reed, Darlene took a position as Surgical Dietitian at the University of Missouri–Columbia Medical Center to pursue a Masters in Nutrition, but she changed her major from nutrition to food systems management. Darlene credits this change to the influence of her major professor, Dr. Aimee Moore. While working on her degree, Darlene worked as the Personnel Training Dietitian, which introduced her to human resources, labor unions, hiring, pay roll, employee evaluation, and discipline systems. She also worked as the Management Research Dietitian at the time when the medical center was piloting computer management systems for Nutrition and Dietetics. This position allowed Darlene to be one of the first five dietitians in the country utilizing computer systems to forecast production demand and size standardized recipes for production and nutritional analysis!

A couple of weeks before graduating with her MS in Food Systems Management, Darlene joined Trans Tech Incorporated in Kansas City as the Implementation and Training Dietitian, where she spent seven years breaking new ground for food service and dietetics. She was promoted several times, and with each position she had to stretch her skills and learn concepts that were not part of most dietetic education programs. Because of the relationships she had developed with hospitals, colleges, and employee cafeterias, Darlene has been able to maintain a consulting business that she formed with a Trans Tech colleague. She has had a variety of contracts over the years, but her current contracts are with the Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services to oversee the SNAP-Ed and SNAP Outreach programs as the SNAP-Ed Nutrition Specialist and the Banner Lassen Medical Center to serve as the Medical Nutrition Therapist.

Born in Twin Falls, Idaho, and raised on a dairy farm in Filer, Idaho, Darlene grew up as the only girl in a family with two brothers. She was told at the age of five that, when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, she responded a “dietitian”. Her parents believe she got this idea from her mother’s college roommate, who was a dietitian. In her spare time, Darlene and her husband participate in antique auctions almost every weekend. They also own a 25-acre gold claim in Seneca, California, and they work the ground for gold every chance they get. Darlene and her husband are also bowlers and have served on bowling association boards over the years.

Darlene has been a member of the Public Health/Community Nutrition Practice Group (PHCNPG) for the last few years with her career change to public health. She has been awarded the Academy Foundation Excellence in Management, the Lenna Francis Cooper Lecturer, Nevada Dietetic Association Dietitian of the Year, Kansas City Dietetic Association Young Dietitian of the Year, and Outstanding Alumni and Centurion Awardee University of Idaho. Most recently, Darlene has been honored by having a scholarship awarded annually in her name to a dietetic student at the University of Nevada Reno, the Darlene A. Dougherty Annual Scholarship.

Darlene believes that the way to have fun and experience new areas of dietetics is to never say no and never believe you don't have the skills to accomplish a new task. PHCNPG is proud of Darlene's work and appreciates her 50 years of contributions to the Academy, public health nutrition, and our profession!

A message from Darlene to PHCNPG student members:

Choose an area of dietetics that you enjoy and you will never have burn-out. There are more ways to use your knowledge and skills than you will ever have a chance to experience.