



► Heather Gardner outside the Ellettsville North facility where she works as a qualified department trainer (QT) in Post Sterilization Services (PSS). Photo by Doug Wright (Doug.Wright@CookMedical.com), an internal content specialist 2 for Corporate Marketing & Communication.

A teacher, a trainer, and a friendly face

Heather Gardner advocates for change and encourages employees to use their voices

Nervous and unsure on her first day, Heather navigated the unfamiliarity of Post Sterilization Services (PSS) at Ellettsville North with ample questions and curiosity in tow. Surrounded by acronyms, processes, and people she didn't know, it stood to be a daunting day. But Heather was ready for trial and error, and eager to make the most of the learning opportunities all around her. Five years later, and proudly still in PSS, Heather Gardner continues to take on new projects, celebrate change, and try her hand at encouraging others to do just that.

"My role here is ever changing, which is great by me. I like being able to handle multiple jobs and being useful in whatever capacity is needed," Heather said.

"If I can do it, you can do it."

One of the roles she enjoys most is being a qualified department trainer (QT). Not only has she had the opportunity to meet new employees, but she has also worked with existing employees during times of need. But what made her want to be a QT in the first place?

"I feel like it's kind of already in me," Heather said. "My background before Cook, I was a preschool teacher for 11 years and a daycare owner before that, so being a teacher or mentor does kind of come naturally.

"This was definitely a different setting for me than what I had been used to in the past, but I do love it, and honestly, I am thankful that it's been appreciated and everybody that I have had the honor of training has been successful," she added, with a smile.

With her own first day at Cook in the back of her mind, Heather regularly remembers the kind words and helping hands that made it possible for her to start this new chapter of her career. Along with her passion for mentoring and her interest in helping others, her own first day

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— Heather Gardner, qualified department trainer for PSS

inspires and helps motivate her as a QT.

"As someone who came here five years ago and had never had any warehouse or factory experience, it was honestly like a foreign language for me," she said. "From the terms we use, to what we do, I knew practically none of it.

"For me, now, what I try to do is break it down for the people I train. I simplify things, use simpler terms, help them not be so anxious or nervous that there is so much to learn they're not going to get it. So, I like setting people at ease and reassuring them that if I can do it, they can do it."

In each new opportunity to be a teacher and a trainer, Heather reminds her students that they have an ally and a friend in her.

An advocate for change

Throughout her years in PSS, especially as someone involved in the training process, Heather has seen and experienced a lot of change in her department.

"There used to be eight different divisions inside this room. Now we are all one big unit," she said. "I like the fact that I get to interact with everyone, I like the movement, and I

like that there's more flow."

This is just one of the many changes Heather has experienced as Cook has grown and applied continuous improvement efforts in her area. Even though change might intimidate some, Heather is far from meek and mild when it comes to growth.

"I can see how changes in a company could scare some people. At my age though, change is good and should be expected," Heather said. "To stay stagnant is where I would be more afraid, so I think change is a constant and it is going to happen, and I welcome a lot of it.

"I loved working with our engineers as one of four people to help communicate with them about making changes in our area," she continued. "I really appreciate the feedback and the acceptance from hearing our ideas, as the ones that are doing the work every day."

Along with her passion for problem solving and helping others, Heather is an advocate for speaking up. As someone who has had the chance to share ideas and to support employees through change processes and training, she recommends that everyone do the same: ask questions, give feedback, and share ideas.

"I would encourage everyone with an idea—and this is something I say a lot, daily actually—to remember that we are all part of a team, and it does take all of us to succeed," Heather said. "All ideas are welcome, whether we use it in that form, or it is adapted to make it work better, but I do believe that our leadership and management team cares and are open to hearing all our ideas. I know I do, so speak up, pass along your ideas, and don't be too intimidated by change."

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