

# Spotlight Interview - Cathy Keith

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Cathy Keith is a Registered/Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist, Certified Food & Spirit Practitioner™, and Licensed Nia Instructor™. Cathy has worked in the Nutrition and Wellness industry for over 30 years, and carries with her extreme knowledge and amazing experiences that she was kind enough to share with me. Cathy went to Michigan State University where she obtained her B.S., with Honor, in Dietetics. Cathy has traveled and lived around the world where she has gained years of experience and has led her to be where she is today.

Cathy recently moved to North Carolina to work on the upcoming launch of her business, *NutriMoves*. Cathy's mission is to empower people to have a deeper relationship with themselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. After speaking with Cathy, here is what I learned:

## **Why did you decide to pursue a career in dietetics?**

Midway through Cathy's undergrad at Michigan State University, she switched career paths to Dietetics. At the time, this was a relatively new area of study that often aligned with Home Economics. However, Cathy's personal struggle with weight issues as an adolescent and teen prompted her desire to learn how to "eat normal" and maintain an optimal weight.

## **Prior Career Paths:**

When Cathy completed her undergrad in the early 80's, the auto industry crashed. This affected the healthcare job market in Michigan due to its deep ties to a major medical insurance company. In addition, when a Dietetics job did open up, everyone she graduated with was fighting for the same position. Struggling to start her career in Michigan, Cathy moved to Illinois where she launched her career as a Clinical Dietitian in Ottawa, IL. At this job, Cathy was responsible for providing medical nutrition therapy, counseling, and food services to hospitalized patients. After 2 years as a Clinical Dietitian, Cathy's gut was telling her that it was time to try something new.

## **Aramark Food & Nutrition Services:**

Cathy moved to Rockford, IL and began a successful and fulfilling relationship with Aramark Food & Nutrition Services. Cathy stayed with this company for 16 years and started as an Assistant Director and worked her way up to Corporate Director. Some of Cathy's duties throughout this specific career were providing clinical nutrition services, administrative activities to support overall operations, directing food service activities, directing all fiscal compliance activities, providing meals to residents and employees, and managing local and national nutrition campaigns. Cathy explained that at Aramark, she was able to dip her toes into what she believes are the four biggest areas of her career: clinical, education, administration, and community.

## **SwedishAmerican Health System:**

At the start of 2000, Cathy felt again as if her gut was telling her to change jobs. Trusting her intuition, Cathy shifted gears to work in a new healthcare field – Complementary and Alternative Medicine / Holistic Healthcare services. Unlike the traditional allopathic medicine model focused on physician-directed symptom management, this new field embraced patient centered whole person care – mind, body, emotions, and spirit. Blending the two philosophies became Cathy's most interesting and exciting challenge.

Cathy accepted a management position within the healthcare system to deploy and expand the Coronary Health Improvement Project. This large community-focused education and experiential program encouraged simple lifestyle changes to significantly reduce, and in many cases eliminate, medical issues (like hypertension and diabetes) that contribute to heart disease. Research standards were applied to the program to measure outcomes and determine the validity and impact of program tenets. The overall results supported the hypothesis that adults will adopt and sustain healthy lifestyle choices when they understand the “why” and “how” of change as well as the mind-body connection.

Encouraged by the results, the VP of HR asked Cathy to apply the some of the program tenets to the wellness programs. One of the most popular stress reduction offerings was the free 20-minute chair massage. Initially offered to the hospital staff 24/7, the success of this program led to expansion throughout the health system and the program is still in place today.

Additionally, the medical community encouraged Cathy and her team to incorporate some of the mind-body practices into the hospital setting and measure the results. Working with physicians, nurses, patients, and ancillary services, the team focused on stress reduction and pain management for pre-surgical patients.

Using carefully written protocols, presurgical patients had the option to inhale lavender essential oil while listening to healing music and viewing relaxing pictures on a specific TV channel. They also had the option to have a hand/foot massage as well as inform the anesthesia team of affirmation statements to be repeated prior to and at the close of surgery in order to reduce stress. Satisfaction and financial outcomes demonstrated that nurses were able to provide more efficient and effective care with the relaxed patient, such as reduced needle sticks or use of certain medicines, compared to the norm. Cathy shared that the success of this program, and the support it received from all areas within the hospital, was one highlight of her career.

## **Office Management Specialist U.S Embassy Luanda, Angola:**

After her work in Rockford, once again Cathy felt that her time in this position was coming to an end, and she needed a fresh start somewhere else. Therefore, she decided to join her spouse overseas and serve as a post administrator for the Global ID badge system, and Crisis & Emergency Planning Application program. She also supported additional Controlled Access Areas as needed. However, during

her time in Africa, Cathy developed a back injury that led to her return to the United States. Instead of returning to Illinois, Cathy decided to plant her roots in the wellness focused city of Boulder, Colorado.

### **Nia Instructor™:**

Shortly after her move, Cathy was introduced to the 60-minute holistic fitness practice called Nia™. Nia™ is a combination of dance arts, martial arts, and healing arts choreographed to a wide range of music. As a sensory-based practice, Nia™ not only tones your body, but it also transforms your mind with its emphasis on mindfulness and pleasure through physical sensation. Cathy explained that setting a focus and intention at the start of class allows each Nia™ instructor the opportunity to deliver a unique class experience. Cathy is a certified and licensed instructor and states that it's a perfect complement to her nutrition roots and holistic health experiences.

Cathy's husband always wanted to live in Austin, Texas; therefore, this was the next destination for Cathy. After 2 years in Boulder, Cathy moved to Austin. From there, she recently moved to North Carolina to launch her holistic coaching business, *NutriMoves*.

### **Advice To Emerging Fitness Professionals:**

Through Cathy's amazing and adventurous career, the advice she offers to emerging dietitian professionals is to take risks. Don't be afraid to move to a new location because every experience is full of opportunities to learn and grow. In addition, her other piece of advice is to always believe in your intuition and "trust your gut". Whenever Cathy got the feeling that she wasn't enjoying a career anymore, or that she learned all that she possible could have, she did something about it and found a new career to learn more from. In the end, she obtained 30 plus years of knowledge that she is now putting into a business of her own. Cathy explained that it's about finding what gives you joy in all that you are doing no matter the career path.