

## Not your conventional place

By Tina Thurmond-Jones | Posted: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 8:40 am

Because a hospital is not a conventional place to grab a quick lunch, customers may not think of Morrison's Cafeteria first, but Kendra Keller, RD, LD, would be happy if they did.

Keller is the director of food and nutrition at Highlands Medical Center in Scottsboro and works hard every day to bring healthy, nutritious meals to patients, visitors and staff.

Originally from Minnesota, she first came to Highlands in 2010 after completing her undergraduate degree in 2009, at the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minnesota.

"In order to become a registered dietician," she said, "you have to complete a year of clinical rotations."

Through a computer program with the Commission on Dietetics, Keller was matched to Oakwood University in Huntsville for an internship that included rotations at Highlands.

She moved to Huntsville along with a high school friend in 2009.

When her internship was over in June 2010, she replaced the hospital's dietician, Sherry Luse, who was moving into the director's position.

"I took the position in August as the clinical dietician," she said. "That involved things like patient education, menu planning at the hospital and the nursing home, and annual, quarterly and new assessments."

In May 2013, Keller was promoted to her current position.

"Sherry was moving out of state," she said, "so I applied for the director's position and got it."

As director, Keller is in charge of scheduling and managing employees, overseeing retail and patient menus, budgets, food and paper costs, regulatory compliances and overseeing the clinical dietician.

"I enjoy it," she said. "It's very challenging, but it's a good challenge. I love seeing the passion in my



### Cafeteria Director

Kendra Keller, RD,LD is the director of food and nutrition at Morrison's Cafeteria inside Highlands Medical Center in Scottsboro.

employees' eyes because they are proud of what they do. They really enjoy taking care of the needs of patients. Meals are among the most important part of the day for patients, and our employees do a good job of making food look and taste good.”

Primarily geared toward ‘country cooking’ in the past, Morrison’s Cafeteria is now focusing on bringing healthier meals to the forefront of their menu.

“The company is focusing more on helping people make healthier decisions by updating nutrition labels and offering things like their new wellness program.”

The program called ‘fitmed,’ operates on a point system and helps employees earn money by offering healthy eating meal cards, exercise programs and smoking cessation incentives.

By choosing a healthy lunch option that includes a 300-400 calorie lunch, employees get a hole punched into a meal card. After 10 meals, the employee acquires 10 points.

Rewards for points include gift certificates and cash bonuses up to \$100.

“The lunches are pre-planned and include a lean meat, vegetable, carbohydrate and bottled water, or a pre-packaged salad and bottled water.”

Although the rewards part of the program is for employees only, the meals are available to the public.

“Anybody can get the meals,” she said. “It’s a great way to lose weight and get healthy.”

Breakfast begins each Monday – Friday at 6:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

“We have oatmeal with fruit, eggs, quiche, and breakfast casserole,” she said. “We also have a fruit and yogurt bar.”

Lunch is served between 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., Monday – Sunday. Some of the most popular lunch choices at Morrison’s are still the fried chicken or fried catfish.

“Our chicken and catfish are hand-breaded and very juicy,” she said. “They have been customer favorites for years.”

As director, Keller has expanded the open-flame grill choices and also the sugar-free dessert items on the cafeteria’s menu.

“We have a fresh salad bar each day and we also have homemade soups and chili,” she said.

The soup is seasonal and includes gumbo, homemade vegetable, broccoli and cheese, white chicken chili or butternut squash and five-bean chili.

“We also have fresh cornbread, cheddar biscuits and various homemade cobblers,” she said. “We have

very good food.”

“A lot of people don’t think about coming to a hospital for breakfast or lunch, but I’d love to see them give us a try.”