

## **Laurie Anderson, Director of Wellness Services, RN, CDE**

Laurie Anderson is a certified family nurse practitioner. In addition to coaching, she also maintains a part-time family practice in a rural health clinic serving a Native American population. She earned a bachelor's degree from Old Dominion University, and a master's degree in nursing from University of RI. She is certified by the American Heart Association in advanced cardiac life support, by the State of Rhode Island as a Diabetes Outpatient Educator, and by the American Cancer Society as a Freedom From Smoking course instructor.

Laurie's own personal involvement with diabetes and calling to become a nurse started at a young age. "My grandmother, with whom I shared the profession of nursing (in fact she inspired me to become a nurse), had type 2 diabetes. She and I were thick as thieves when I was a child and teenager." This involvement has also continued on a personal level in her adult life when she had be-friend a co-worker with Type 1 Diabetes. Laurie developed a huge admiration for the way in which her friend chose to positively view her life with diabetes.

Laurie feels that the role of a diabetes educator is to help people to see the tools available to them as not threatening, and help them to improve their self-confidence in using these tools to take better care of themselves. "A good diabetes educator (and ours are great!) will take the mystery out of diabetes management by removing the medicalization of the disease and by helping the person living with diabetes to understand that the control is in their hands, not their health care providers. There are a lot of health care providers who do not manage diabetes well, and whose patients are suffering the ill consequences of this poor management."

When Fit4D came along she was very excited to have an opportunity to work on a larger scale in diabetes education. Through her experience she found many health care providers don't have the time or the knowledge to provide adequate diabetes self-management education. Laurie has also found that in many rural communities there are no outside resources to refer their patients and in places where diabetes educators do exist, it is often a many months-long wait to see one.

"The best part about what FIT4D does for clients is that we provide them with continuous access to diabetes educators. Our clients get a whole team of experts to work with, including an RN or nurse practitioner, an exercise physiologist or personal trainer, and a registered dietitian. When they send an email to their team they get a response from someone within 24 hours, frequently in a matter of an hour or two!"