

Northern Wisconsin Initiatives to Attract, Recruit, and Retain Workforce

Hudson Hospital: Registered Nurses – Recruitment, Retention, and Training

Hudson Hospital's registered nurse turnover rates for the past three years – 25% (2005), 20% (2006) and 5.8% (2007) reflect the success we've had with our *Registered Nurse – Recruitment, Retention and Training* initiatives. Three years ago, long shifts, staff fatigue, staff retention, and a nurse shortage were primary concerns for nursing leadership. Realizing staff satisfaction and retention directly impacted patient care delivery, and ultimately patient satisfaction; turnaround efforts began both on organization-wide and department levels.

Organizationally, the *Elements of Care* (People, Quality, Experience, Stewardship and Growth), upon which all decisions are made, and our Shared Values – guides for everyday actions, were introduced. Nursing Care leadership committed to taking care of patients and the business of our organization.

Within Nursing Care, efforts were underway to recruit, retain, and train registered nurses. Retention initiatives instrumental in bringing about change include:

- Engaged Nurse Leadership
- Regular Rounding Opportunities (Board members, Medical Chief of Staff, Chief Nursing Officer, department manager) – nurses are heard.
- Participation in National Quality Initiative – *Transforming Care at the Bedside* (TCAB). Front-line staff driven; fosters teamwork. Nurses lead quality improvement efforts. Result: empowered nurses.

Contact: Deb Brisch-Cramer, VP & CNO, Hudson Hospital at 715-531-6012 or dbrischcramer@hudsonhospital.org.

Memorial Medical Center: Safe-Lifting Helps Address Challenges for Aging Workforce

Like many hospitals that have benefited from a stable workforce, Memorial Medical Center in Ashland has also faced some challenges with its aging workgroup. Helping MMC employees stay healthy enough to keep working and enjoy their retirement once they quit, has become an important priority for the organization. In 2006, MMC, along with Flambeau Medical Center in Park Falls and Burnett Medical Center in Grantsburg, was the recipient of a Safe-Lifting Initiative Training Grant from the Department of Workforce Development. The grant was administered by the Healthcare Workforce Network under Northwest CEP, Inc.

Prior to the grant, MMC had already initiated a Safe Patient Handling Policy, updated patient lifting and repositioning equipment, and trained all patient care providers. However, it was apparent that additional efforts were needed to change the culture if the new practices were to be effective. The grant money enabled MMC to conduct additional training for all of its patient care providers. This second phase of training emphasized “hands on” and used return demonstration as its primary learning method. The organizational expectation that safe lifting methods and equipment be used correctly and consistently was also emphasized.

Contact: Kevin Stranberg, Memorial Medical Center, 715-685-5500

Burnett Medical Center: Acute Care Orientation Program

Due to a desire to improve the Acute Nursing Orientation Program, Burnett Medical Center in Grantsburg is in the process of radically improving their process. Implementation of a Nurse Preceptor Program is underway. It is anticipated that implementation of the Preceptor Program will improve staff relationships

to increase retention. With the Preceptor Program also comes the development of a Mentor Program, which will follow the preceptor period to allow new nursing staff to consult with their "nurse champion."

Orientation time frames are being lengthened, and departmental crossover during the orientation period is being limited. The new program also calls for increased orientation concentration in specialty areas, particularly the emergency department.

A comprehensive tool/checklist has been developed to examine which skills need more training. This tool will ensure that the preceptor covers all necessary information with the orientee during the orientation time frame. It will also allow for the selection of appropriate training following the orientation period.

New evaluation processes are being developed as part of this Program to determine the effectiveness on multiple levels. These evaluations will be used to modify the new Program and allow for further training for any and all staff for which it is deemed necessary.

Contact: Amy Fossum, Burnett Medical Center, 715-463-5353

St. Joseph's Hospital: Attracting Students to Health Careers

St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls feels a responsibility to give back to its community. In addition to numerous community education programs, the hospital is a resource of information for area students who are interested in health care careers. Whether it is introductory information for middle school students or valuable education advice for soon-to-graduate high school students,

St. Joseph's Hospital staff is eager to share their experience with the students.

Each year, St. Joseph's Hospital professionals are lecturers in the local public high school's Health Careers Class. This class is an elective course available to Juniors and Seniors at the school who are serious about their interest in a health care career. Hospital staff provide a thorough description of their job functions, diversity of jobs in their field, educational requirements for their job, best schools to attend, job demand, salaries, etc. Middle School requests are interested in a general introduction into the job possibilities in health care. Area Catholic Junior and Senior High Schools also request hospital speakers to share their advice with students.

St. Joseph's Hospital also works with area high schools to arrange for job shadowing opportunities for students who have demonstrated a significant interest in health care careers.

Contact: Bill Larson, St. Joseph's Hospital, 715-726-3349

Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley: Investing in Staff

Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley in Bloomer has a tuition reimbursement program for half and full-time employees to pursue further education leading to a degree, license or certificate from an accredited institution or professionally recognized association.

The tuition reimbursement program is intended as an incentive for employees to increase their knowledge and skills. This program benefits the organization and its staff by improving patient care, enhancing public confidence and trust, and by aiding in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff.

This program was established in 2001, and utilization has steadily increased. In 2007, Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley was pleased to be able to support staff through reimbursement by paying 31 recipients a total of \$28,500; this was three times the amount from prior years. While having such a large number of employees enrolled in educational programs does create staffing challenges to accommodate their class schedules at times, many directors feel it is a very worthwhile program for employees to utilize. Of the 31 students, the majority are enrolled in health care-related programs such as nursing and radiology. These

employees are generally able to fill openings within our system when their programs are complete — openings often considered hard to recruit.

Contact: Jerilyn Mulcahy, Luther Midelfort, 715-838-5346

Luther Midelfort: Attracting Students to Health Careers

At Luther Midelfort's annual Career Day, students get a taste of the professional health care gamut — from orthopedic surgeon to pharmacist, nurse to respiratory therapist and more.

"Students who are interested in a health care career spend focused time with health care professionals to explore what they do, how they do it and why they find it exciting and interesting," said Jerilyn Mulcahy, supervisor in Luther Midelfort's Human Resources Department.

In 2007, more than 50 students participated from 12 Chippewa Valley high schools. More than 20 presenters talked about their personal career path, the role their career plays in health care, school requirements and earning potential. Many give "hands-on" presentations, such as hand surgeon Dr. Jose Ortiz who shared the career path he took to become a physician and the need to study hard and surround one's self with a positive support system.

Here's what the teachers had to say about Luther Midelfort's 2007 Career Day:

- "Excellent day for prospective medical field students. What we saw was great and left us wanting more. Loved the hands-on opportunities."
- "Thank you for continuing this program. It is special to be included in this day. Your staff does a great job. *Would love to go back to school and go into health care!"

Career Day at Luther Midelfort started in 2003 and is held annually each fall.

Contact: Jerilyn Mulcahy, Luther Midelfort, Eau Claire 715-838-5346

Sacred Heart Hospital: Summer Student Nurse Internship Program

Student nurses study biology, chemistry, anatomy and physiology in the classroom, but many times don't have the opportunity to put their clinical skills into practice while still in school. Sacred Heart Hospital's Summer Student Nurse Internship Program is changing that for student nurses in western Wisconsin and surrounding areas. The eight-week summer program, which is sponsored by the hospital, enables qualified student nurses enrolled in an accredited nursing program to experience clinical patient care — such as rounding, assessing patients, charting, IV therapy and more — under the direct supervision of an experienced registered nurse employed by the hospital. Approximately 72 students have taken part in the program, now in its eighth year.

To qualify, students must have successfully completed two semesters in an ADN program or the third year of a BSN program before applying for the program; and provide a clinical reference and letter of recommendation; in addition to completing an application and essay.

"It's an amazing recruiting tool," says Joe Nezworski, RN, Director of Staffing and Scheduling at Sacred Heart Hospital. "We've recruited approximately one third of past program participants into nursing positions at our hospital once they've completed their formal academic program."

In addition to broadening students' nursing experience, the program also benefits patients. If a patient has a particular need and could profit from someone spending time with them talking and listening, a student nurse is available to spend the extra time, therefore improving the overall patient experience.

Contact: Joe Nezworski, RN, Sacred Heart Hospital, 715-839-4457

Rusk County Memorial Hospital: Health Care Academy of Ladysmith-Hawkins School District

The Health Care Academy (HCA) is a public charter school authorized by the Ladysmith-Hawkins School District. The Academy curriculum and programs are specifically tailored to students with an interest in pursuing a career in the health care field. Many Academy classes allow students to earn both HCA and technical education credits through our partnerships with WITC-Rice Lake and CVTC–Eau Claire. This allows our students to get a head start on their post-secondary education while being engaged in rigorous and relevant coursework. In addition, our students may take courses that result in complete certification and direct employability skills as a Certified Nursing Assistant and as a Dental Assistant. While many courses and labs are held at the HCA campus housed within existing district buildings, we are very grateful to Rusk County Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home, Marshfield Dental Clinic – Ladysmith Center, and many other local partners that provide clinical training sites. Furthermore, HCA students access these local partnerships for mentoring and guidance opportunities.

Contact: Matt Bunton, Director, Health Care Academy, Ladysmith Hawkins School, 715-532-5531

Spooner Health System: High School Health Career Fair

With the shortage of health care workers in all areas of the health industry, Spooner Health System decided to hold a Health Career Fair for High School Students.

Our objectives were to:

- Introduce the students to the many careers that are available in health care.
- Provide the student with the opportunity to speak with staff about their personal job experiences.
- Inform students of the educational requirements needed for each career and to guide them as to what courses they should take in high school.
- Encourage the student to participate in our job shadowing program.

The managers in all departments at SHS did a great job of creating display boards with information about each of their departments meeting the above objectives.

We also had representatives from Chippewa Valley Tech, UW Barron County, W.I.T.C. Rice Lake and Lake Superior College, Duluth, MN to inform students of their health related education programs. The career fair was open to the general public and current employees interested in advancing their careers. We will offer a Health Career Fair annually with the hopes of reaching even more students.

Contact: Claudia Hagen, RN, Spooner Health System, 715-635-2111