

## **Southern Wisconsin Initiatives: Attracting, Recruiting, Retaining Workforce**

### **Mercy Health System Aging Workforce Retention Strategies**

A large portion of Mercy Health System's workforce is aging as the "baby-boomers" reach pre-retirement ages. Mercy made it a goal to develop expanded programs to retain older workers and implemented several proactive work-life benefit and policies. In 2006, Mercy was recognized by AARP as the nation's number one workplace for individuals over age 50. Mercy's HR programs and benefits geared to meet the special needs of older workers include:

**Flexible schedules and work opportunities.** Mercy designed its health care system to be very flexible in developing work schedules. Health care professionals can work straight nights or weekends, allowing others to work fewer weekends and nights. They can also choose to work full-time, part-time or even take a "pool" position, where they can virtually design their own schedule around individual needs.

**Strong internal promotion and transfer program.** Mercy provides a broad variety of career opportunities. Over 50% of MHS employees have moved positions within the system.

**Low Lift Program.** As workers age, lifting patients becomes a real barrier to retention. To help with lifting duties, Mercy implemented a "low lift program," providing nurses and other health care workers special equipment and training to aid in safe patient transfers.

**Work-to-Retire Program.** Mercy implemented a new program to work closely with employees nearing retirement by encouraging them to consider staying with Mercy as they "transition" to less-than-full-time work. Work-to-Retire options include; full-time to part-time, pool, seasonal and work at home options.

**Special Benefits for Longer Term Workers,** Mercy designed programs to reward and recognize longer-term employees. Examples include:

- Retiree health benefits for employees 55+
- Payment for certifications and licensures for employees with 10+ years
- Optional long-term care insurance
- Community volunteer work paid time

Contact: Kathy Harris, Mercy Health System, 608-756-6184

### **Meriter Health Services: Minority Scholarships**

The Meriter Minority Healthcare Careers Scholarship was started in 2003 as a way of putting into action our commitment to encouraging interest in health care careers among minority students.

The scholarship, which provides tuition assistance ranging from \$500 up to \$4000 per year, is an exciting opportunity for recipients to see health care at work and is a chance to experience the rewards of caring for others. To date, Meriter has awarded 29 scholarships. The Meriter Medical Staff also provides an additional scholarship of \$4000 per year.

Meriter provides more than just financial support. Each year Meriter hosts a special program that includes tours and meetings with executives and other leaders to learn about the many programs at Meriter. Recipients also may elect to work at Meriter in either a paid employment or a volunteer service role while they are pursuing their education. Assignment is based on student interests.

With the program now in its 5th year, Meriter has had the pleasure of being the post graduation employer of some of the students who have obtained their degree with assistance from Meriter. The bond between student and Meriter that is created through this program is truly special.

Contact Mae Knowles, Meriter Media Relations, 608-417-5622

### **Meriter Health Services: Seasonal Nursing Program**

Meriter is proud to be one of the only hospitals in Wisconsin to offer a seasonal, per diem program for registered nurses designed to fit the RN's schedule and lifestyle. The Seasonal Nursing Program is especially attractive to a registered nurse who enjoys traveling, or only working during part of the year, and to registered nurses who live in a warmer climate during the winter, and come back to Madison in the spring.

Participants in the Seasonal Nursing Program need to be available for 12 continuous weeks. The scheduling requirement is a minimum of 32-hour availability with two weekend shifts required in a four week schedule. Participants are eligible for all differentials, premiums and bonuses. The Seasonal Nursing Program does not include the Meriter benefit package.

For more information contact Mae Knowles, Meriter Media Relations 608-417-5622

### **Divine Savior Healthcare: Nurses Earn Advanced Degree in their Community**

In 2000, Divine Savior Healthcare in Portage collaborated with Madison Area Technical College to implement a program called LPN-to-ADN. Divine Savior recruits licensed practical nurses (LPNs) who strive to become registered nurses and contracts with MATC to provide many of the classes in Portage so they may earn their associate degree in nursing (ADN). The program allows Divine Savior to bypass the waiting list for nurses, and benefits students with local classes. In addition, Divine Savior pays for the students' tuition and books and provides benefits in exchange for a weekend work rotation agreement. Divine Savior's third LPN-to-ADN class, consisting of eight students, will graduate in May 2008. Seventeen nurses graduated from the previous two classes.

Contact: Jenny Sauer, Divine Savior Healthcare, 608-742-4131

### **Monroe Clinic: Low Lift/No Lift Leads to Dramatic Decrease in Injuries, Safer for Aging Workforce**

The Low Lift/No Lift Program was initiated in the hospital setting at Monroe Clinic to address injuries caused by moving patients. A multi-disciplinary group including staff from Human Resources, Med/Surg Nursing, Rehabilitation Services, and Nursing Education worked together to develop and implement this program. Easy-lift and easy-stand mechanical lifts were purchased and staff went through intensive body mechanic training as well as training on the actual lifts. The program resulted in an immediate and dramatic decrease in work-related injuries due to lifting and moving patients. It is an employee satisfier especially for our aging workforce. We are currently exploring expanding this program to the clinic setting where we are seeing an increasing number of patients with very limited mobility.

Contact: Paula Elmer, RN MSN, The Monroe Clinic, 608-324-1000

### **Beloit Memorial Hospital: Student Nurse Program Provides Clinical Experience**

We have a very successful Student Nurse program for nursing students during the summer before they graduate. Our program is small, but the students we select for the program work very closely with their mentor and have opportunities to do procedures and pass medications under supervision. The mentors have all attended our yearly Preceptor Workshop and specifically request to work with the Student Nurses. We select four students each summer who have expressed an interest in working at Beloit Memorial Hospital when they graduate. The Student Nurses go through the entire Nursing Orientation that all new nurses at Beloit Memorial Hospital go through. The mentors are very committed to this program and are an essential component for its success. This program has resulted in the majority of the students involved being hired as new graduates. We are truly growing our own!

Contact: Bonnie Scholko RN, Beloit Memorial Hospital, 608-364-5011

### **Club Scrub Introduces Students to Health-Related Careers**

The Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative Club Scrub program is designed to familiarize middle school students with the many health care occupations required to effectively run a hospital. By fostering interest early on, hospitals may be able to recruit these future workers into their workforce.

Club Scrub is an after-school program designed to spark interest in health-related careers among middle school 7th and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students through informative, hands-on activities. Students have the opportunity to speak with health care providers and try things out in a variety of hospital departments (including the laboratory, nursing areas, emergency room, surgery, and various therapy departments). Participants try their hand at suturing, applying casts, and practice giving injections, in addition to checking out the operating room, Wellness Center, and other hospital departments.

The two hospitals listed below are among several Wisconsin hospitals that have adopted and implemented Club Scrub in their communities.

**The Monroe Clinic:** Julie Allemagne, HR, 608-324-1421

**Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics:** Robbi J. Eccher, HR, 608-643-7172

### **Watertown Area Health Services: Focus on Attracting Students to Health Careers**

At Watertown Area Health Services, we are committed in our efforts to help grow Tomorrow's Workforce in attracting students to health careers. We offer several opportunities including:

- job shadows
- Youth Apprenticeships
- clinical sites
- tours and teacher in-service days
- tuition reimbursement and scholarships
- annual Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work day
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All of these programs have been successful for us and we hope we have attracted many students to pursuing a career in health care. I feel the most successful in recent years has been our **Healthcare Explorers** program. We run this free program from October through April and invite students from local high schools through their guidance or career services departments as well as the local newspaper. Each month, we have two departments host the two hour evening program by providing information about careers in their department including college and career outlook information, a department tour, and a hands-on activity. Students can attend all or one session and provide feedback after each to make sure that their expectations are being met. This oftentimes leads to a student taking an interest in a job shadow experience which further enhances their knowledge of the profession. It has also proven to be very rewarding for our associates with a minimal time commitment.

Contact: Kate Driessen, Watertown Area Health Services, 920-262-4521

### **Beaver Dam Community Hospitals, Inc: Youth and Working Adults Learn About Health Careers**

Building tomorrow's workforce has been an initiative of Beaver Dam Community Hospitals, Inc for the past year. This initiative has centered around high school students and mid career individuals who may be looking for a career change either by choice or as a result of economic changes in the job market.

Area high school junior and senior students were invited to a symposium entitled "Design Your Destination in Health Care" which focused on the variety of health care opportunities available to them. The Mid-Career Symposium focused on "Exploring Health Care Careers" for working adults who may be seeking a change or forced to look at career options. Both types of symposiums provided hospital tours, career, educational and financial information, guest speakers from a university and a technical school, and the opportunity to speak with hospital staff in each represented area.

Over 150 individuals were given the opportunity to explore health care careers by focusing on this initiative and gave "excellent" rankings to both programs.

Contact: Trish Kienitz, Beaver Dam Community Hospital, 920-887-7181