

Western Wisconsin Initiatives to Attract, Recruit and Retain Workforce

Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston, Vernon Memorial Healthcare in Viroqua, and Memorial Hospital in Black River Falls: Wisconsin Technical College Expands to Provide Local Access to Nursing Program

Wisconsin's Technical Colleges recognize that to meet the demand for nurses, they need to bring education opportunities to the people instead of asking the people to come to them. Western Technical College, whose main campus is in La Crosse, brought the nursing program to three of its extended campuses to provide access to people in the rural communities surrounding Viroqua, Mauston, and Black River Falls. The expansion was made possible through partnerships with local medical facilities – Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston, Vernon Memorial Healthcare in Viroqua, and Memorial Hospital in Black River Falls. The hospitals have donated money, equipment, use of their facilities, and even staff members to assist with training future nurses. Through these partnerships, Western students get essential hands-on experience with the latest technology and the hospitals get potential employees who are already trained. And, by offering several rural clinic sites, a high-tech simulation lab, and online coursework, the college has nearly doubled the capacity of the nursing program.

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Black River Memorial Hospital: Patient Lift Equipment Protects Patients, Employees

Black River Memorial Hospital is working to retain and protect its patient care workforce by adding equipment to decrease or eliminate patient lifting injuries. During the planning for the hospital's expansion, a multidisciplinary team of staff and managers evaluated several different types of equipment to meet this goal.

The team determined the high risk areas and assisted in evaluating the cost to benefit ratio of portable vs. permanent equipment. The result has been the installation of ceiling lift supports in many of the areas of the hospital that posed a risk to staff.

The Medical Surgical 21-bed unit has the capability of using a ceiling lift in all of the private patient rooms. Additional areas have been outfitted with the support to add lifts as needed. Staff injuries are tracked and the effect of adding these lifts will be evaluated.

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Franciscan Skemp Healthcare: Healthcare Career Extravaganza

For the past two years local high school students have had an opportunity to interact with nurses and other allied health professionals as part of the Franciscan Skemp Healthcare Career Extravaganza program.

The day-long program is a mix of presentations, panel discussions, and hands-on experiences. The session wraps up with a mock code call where students also learn the value of teamwork in critical situations. Over the past two years more than 150 students from 15 schools have participated.

Supervisors from departments such as radiology, respiratory care and physical therapy discuss education requirements, work environments and expectations that they have for staff in their respective fields.

Students rotate through various skill stations to experience first-hand what it's like to "be on the other end of the needle" when drawing blood in a lab, putting a cast on a broken arm or the intricacies of donning a surgical gown without contaminating its surface.

The experience concludes with a mock trauma code where students work alongside a variety of health care professionals as accident victims are transitioned along the continuum of care from arrival at the emergency department to stabilization in intensive care.

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Gundersen Lutheran Health System: Pharmacist Recruitment

Recruitment and retention of quality pharmacists is critical to efficient functioning of clinical services within the Gundersen Lutheran Health System (GL). Currently there are seven openings for clinical pharmacists within our system. In an effort to recruit qualified candidates, several strategies were developed and implemented in late 2007. The first step in these efforts was to create a look and tag line for GL pharmacy marketing materials. It was determined that the Mississippi River would be the back drop artwork for all pieces and the tag line, "Grand River, Great Future" was used throughout. Text was created to not only highlight the scenic beauty of the La Crosse area, but also depict GL as the destination of choice for candidates. Marketing pieces created included: a print ad, with three month placement in The Pharmacist Magazine (November, December, and January). Along with the subscribing members, the December issue was distributed to all registrants of the annual Association of Healthcare Pharmacists (ASHP) meeting in December. Three other collateral pieces were also created that helped in the recruitment process - they were; emails to registrants of ASHP inviting them to meet with GL representatives at ASHP; postcards were created and used at the meeting inviting candidates to contact us while at the meeting; a pharmacy brochure was updated to reflect current openings and changes within the department; and informational packets were created that were handed out to all those that we met at ASHP. Information within these packets included GL benefits information, interesting facts and accomplishments about GL, the most current GL employee newsletter, a pharmacy brochure, pharmacy postcard and the recruiter's business card. As a result of these recruitment efforts, there are six highly qualified pharmacists scheduled for on-site interviews during January and February, three additional interviews are pending scheduling, and one offer has been extended.

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Gundersen Lutheran Health System: Partnership Brings Nursing Program to Western Wisconsin

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Western Campus for Nursing at Gundersen Lutheran Health System is a partnership between a Big 10 University and an outstanding academic medical center. This innovative Bachelor of Science in Nursing program offers the upper-division nursing component of the UW-Madison School of Nursing curriculum on-site at Gundersen Lutheran in La Crosse.

The UW Western Campus in La Crosse offers an unparalleled education provided by an interdisciplinary team of clinical experts who challenge students to become strong leaders with superb nursing expertise and clinical judgment. Gundersen Lutheran nursing faculty with advanced nursing degrees and years of clinical experience teach classes in academic partnership with UW-Madison School of Nursing faculty. Low student to faculty ratios help ensure attention to educational needs and provide better opportunities for learning.

After their experience at the most comprehensive health care source in western Wisconsin, many graduates choose to join the team of more than 1,500 nurses and start their careers with Gundersen Lutheran. This program is a collaboration between University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing and Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation. For more information visit gundluth.org/nurses.

Vernon Memorial Healthcare: Career Exploration Program

Two-hundred-seven students took part in the Career Exploration/Job Shadow program at Vernon Memorial Healthcare in 2007. These students came from seven different high schools in the Vernon Memorial Healthcare service area as well as one technical college and several other colleges and universities.

The Career Exploration/Job Shadow program is designed to give high school and college students first hand knowledge of how a particular health care professional functions in his or her job. The goal of this experience is to increase student understanding of how individuals work together in their departments and how the parts of Vernon Memorial Healthcare work together to form a health care team.

Every spring VMH publicizes "Career Exploration Days" in local newspapers and in high schools to encourage students to spend a portion of their day job shadowing a health care professional. This two week publicity campaign draws attention to the opportunity VMH affords students to investigate health care as a potential career.

Students are invited to select from among a variety of health care positions that interest them and then complete a career exploration/job shadow application available from the VMH Marketing/Public Relations Department. A job shadow experience is then scheduled. Prior to their career exploration or job shadow experience, students are required to review an informational packet containing information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), patient privacy and confidentiality policies and proper attire. Students are made aware that individual departments have guidelines that must be followed.

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