



Center for Health Workforce Development in Tennessee Awards Grants

The Center for Health Workforce Development in Tennessee has awarded \$253,000 in grants to several hospitals and other entities in an effort to increase recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals in the state and help ease the workforce shortage.

The center was launched last year by the Tennessee Hospital Education and Research Foundation (THERF), the education arm of the Tennessee Hospital Association (THA). It is funded, in part, by a \$775,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The workforce shortage is a critical problem in Tennessee, and continues to be one of the top priorities for hospital CEOs. Hospitals are having a very difficult time finding enough nurses, pharmacists, radiological technologists and other health professionals to work at their institutions.

Tennessee is facing a shortage of nurses and other healthcare professionals that has doubled since 1998 and is projected to steadily increase through 2020, according to a recent study by THA.

In 1998, approximately 5.5 percent of the registered nurse positions in Tennessee's hospitals were unfilled. In 2001, that number increased to 9.4 percent.

The intent of the grant program is to assist in the implementation of model programs that can be replicated statewide and support collaboration with educational institutions providing health professions training. Grantees included:

- **Sumner Regional Health System**, Gallatin, \$25,000. Funds the development of a standardized curriculum and competency development in intravenous therapy for licensed practical nurses.
- **Austin Peay State University**, Clarksville, \$64,000. Provides funding to hire an additional medical technology faculty member to increase student enrollment.
- **Jackson-Madison County General Hospital**, \$41,000. In partnership with the hospital, this grant will provide funding to hire an additional faculty member at Jackson State Community College in the registered nursing program and supplies and equipment for the nursing laboratory.
- **Methodist Healthcare**, Memphis, \$45,000. Assists in providing high school students with rotations/experiences in healthcare professions through a summer internship program.
- **Baptist College of Health Sciences**, Memphis, \$30,000. Helps introduce teachers to health careers and technology via a health sciences consortium summer institute.

- **Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation**, Memphis, \$23,000. Focuses on augmenting nursing school faculty with practicing nurses to increase the student enrollment capacity.
- **Mountain States Health Alliance**, Johnson City, \$25,000. A health career advisor will implement activities in schools and communities with a focus on providing healthcare career awareness.

The center plans to make funds available to hospital districts that have not yet received any grants. The districts are to submit requests to implement health career activities in their region.

Workforce Tools for Healthcare Leaders

In spring 2002, the American Hospital Association (AHA) released *In Our Hands: How Hospital Leaders Can Build a Thriving Workforce*.

This report included a collection of ideas and strategies that hospitals across the U.S. are using to make workforce changes and recruit and retain staff.

In addition, AHA has developed *Workforce Tools for Health Care Leaders*. This tool kit is designed to connect hospitals with an array of ideas, strategies and examples of what is already working to solve the workforce shortage, and to define how those ideas can make a difference. The tool kit contains five distinct resources:

- *The Workforce Strategy Map*: A guide to help chart the organization's workforce strategy.
- *Healthcare @Work 2002*: A report with important insights on improving healthcare employees' commitment and loyalty.
- *The Dynamics of Satisfaction*: A tool to help enhance satisfaction of both employees and patients.
- *Workforce Ideas in Action*: A book containing 100 real-world examples of how colleagues nationwide are tackling the workforce challenge and getting results.
- *AHA Member Service/Resources*: A guide to help make the most of the workforce services and resources.

Each AHA member CEO will be sent one copy of the tool kit. The tool kit and the case examples also are available for purchase by nonmembers by contacting Deb Stock, AHA vice president, member relations, at 312-422-3315.

Ideas in Action

A Collaborative Approach to Healthcare Workforce Shortages

Lincoln County Health System took a proactive stance on healthcare workforce shortages in the community by convening a meeting of key community stakeholders in December.

Representatives from local high schools and academies, Motlow State Community College, Lincoln/Donaldson Care Centers, Tennessee Technology Center and the Tennessee Hospital Association participated in these discussions.

The purpose of the meeting was to establish a dialog among participants relative to current and future workforce shortages in Lincoln county.

Lincoln County Health System already has established successful partnerships with educational institutions in its community and beyond. The hospital serves as a clinical rotation site for Motlow State Community College and the Tennessee Technology Center in Shelbyville.

The hospital has established a year-round teen volunteers program, which has been very successful. The staff also is looking at additional opportunities to offer job shadowing and mentoring programs for students.

The hospital has chosen to take advantage of current opportunities to reach out to people in industry who have lost their jobs, emphasizing healthcare careers that have job security, flexible schedules, and are challenging, yet rewarding.

Lincoln County Health System is looking at ways to attract young people into the healthcare field, as well as articulation agreements to move students through healthcare programs as quickly as possible.

After the initial meeting in December, hospital representatives met with Lisa Thomas, health science education instructor, Lincoln County High School, to plan job-shadowing opportunities for local high school students. A plan was put in place for 25 students (twice the number of students in 2002) to begin a job shadowing experience at the hospital by the end of January.

The hospital also is moving forward with plans to begin a nursing tech certification class at the hospital in the fall this year.

In addition, the hospital is working with Thomas to develop a healthcare speaker's list, which she may utilize throughout the year.

The goal of this collaborative group effort is to strengthen the hospital's bond with the Lincoln County High School and surrounding educational facilities. The hospital is forging vital partnerships with education and other industries in the community, as well as surrounding communities, in an effort to match the needs of the hospital with the needs of the communities it serves.

Hospital Contact: *Vicky Groce, Certified Family Nurse Practitioner, Chief Nursing Officer, Lincoln County Health System.*

Enrollments Rise at U.S. Nursing Colleges and Universities Is It Enough?

According to the results of the annual survey recently released by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), enrollments in entry-level baccalaureate programs in nursing increased by 8 percent in fall 2002 over last year.

This increase comes at a time when the need for nurses with baccalaureate and graduate degrees is expanding in the U.S. healthcare system. Though this increase signals a shift in enrollment trends, the number of students in the educational pipeline still is insufficient to meet the projected demand for one million new nurses over the next 10 years.

Schools across the country have done an excellent job in responding to the nursing shortage and getting the word out about career opportunities in the nursing field. The upswing in enrollments is encouraging, but there is a long way to go before meeting the projected demand for nurses into the foreseeable future.

Nursing schools across the country are struggling to find creative ways to expand student capacity despite many obstacles. A shortage of nursing faculty, funding cuts, inadequate facilities, competition for students and a lack of clinical placement opportunities are hampering efforts to attract and retain more students. To overcome these challenges, schools are forming partnerships with clinical agencies to support mutual needs, lobbying for continued state and federal monies, retooling marketing strategies, and stepping up efforts to expand diversity and recruit new populations into nursing.

To strengthen these efforts, some states, including Texas, Pennsylvania and Florida, have passed new legislation to provide more funding for nursing schools to expand their programs and accommodate more students. Faculty shortages are being addressed to a limited degree through partnerships between schools and healthcare facilities that allow their personnel to serve as teachers and provide clinical support. Schools also are reaching out to career changers and those impacted by the economic downturn with accelerated baccalaureate programs that offer the fastest route to becoming a registered nurse for those already holding a degree in another field.

Although enrollments are moving in the right direction, schools are not meeting the demand for nursing care nationally. The most recent projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that one million new and replacement nurses will be needed by the year 2010. The shortage is expected to intensify over the next decade as baby boomers age and a large percentage of the current nursing workforce retires.

Nursing must join with stakeholders within the healthcare community to find solutions to the faculty shortage, lobby collectively for resources to expand student capacity and improve infrastructures, create career ladders for nurses as a retention mechanism, and reach out to diverse students.

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), December 2002