

CSSI Works to Increase Awareness for Educational Assistance

One of the challenges faced in the Southern Economic Region (SEDR) is the lack of awareness of scholarship opportunities available for students pursuing healthcare careers. There are many existing regional efforts that include extensive scholarship and incentive programs for healthcare employees and for graduating high school students within healthcare institutions. Several hospitals have initiated "pre-pay" tuition and fee programs rather than the traditional post award. For the working poor it is a recognized barrier to expect personal resources to pre-pay college expenses. Community colleges in the SEDR also provide numerous college foundation nursing scholarships sponsored by health care providers. There are also many existing government programs that can assist with educational expenses.

One example is the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). WIA programs, such as the Mentor/Tutor program have been developed and funded to ensure that the students entering a nurse training program will have the support needed to complete their program. WIA can also be a source of funding for individuals wishing to be trained as a healthcare worker.

Scholarships/Incentive Programs

In order to supply more entry level nurses, it is important "to grow our own" and target special populations that may be more likely to stay in the region for

employment. Incentive and scholarship programs increase the probability that graduates will remain at the facility for at least the minimum-required years. Studies have shown that some will stay with the facility out of a sense of loyalty for their assistance. Examples of scholarship funding in the SEDR follow:

Southern Illinois Healthcare (SIH)

SIH oversees several facilities within the Southern Economic Development Region employing over 2,000 healthcare workers. The hospitals under administration by SIH include the following: Memorial Hospital of Carbondale, Herrin Hospital, St. Joseph Memorial Hospital of Murphysboro, and Miners Memorial Health Center in West Frankfort. In addition, SIH administers the following healthcare facilities with locations throughout the region: Rehab Unlimited, Fit For Work, Herrin Hospital Obstetrical and Gynecological Services, The Breast Center of Carbondale, Women's Diagnostic Center in Herrin, and the Cancer Care Center in Carbondale and Marion.

In order to address the critical need for nurses in their facilities, SIH implemented a scholarship program in 2000 for their employees and students. The average award ranges from \$5,000-\$6,000 for two years to cover tuition, books, lab fees, uniforms and some supplies. If the student needs more funding, SIH will consider amending the contract to include additional need. The scholarship recipient is required to work for



"The scholarship was great. I had it for two years, both for my LPN and my RN and I didn't have to pay any tuition. They were very cooperative and willing to work with me and help me get my education. Kristin King was extremely helpful."
— Ashley Jansen, RN & SIH scholarship recipient

SIH for 2 years (typically) after graduation. The summer of 2003 was the first year SIH had graduating students. During this time period eleven RN's were graduated from local training programs and hired within SIH facilities. Thirteen students graduated in 2004, and twenty-two graduated in 2005. In the past year alone, the Southern Illinois Healthcare system has contributed over \$89,500 for the educational expenses of registered nursing students in the Southern Economic Development Region.

Hamilton Memorial Hospital

Hamilton Memorial Hospital in McLeansboro offers the same type of scholarship program as that offered by SIH.

Though Hamilton Memorial is a smaller more rural healthcare system, they fully support and fund the educational opportunities and advancement potential for their employees and will fund all employee requests for education expenses in certain healthcare related fields. Any graduating high school senior living in Hamilton County is eligible for this program. The only requirement is that students must complete one full year of employment for each year of study paid by the hospital.

Additionally, Hamilton Memorial has collaborated with local high schools and Rend Lake College to promote awareness of healthcare career opportunities and to increase the number of potential nursing candidates. The hospital has recently implemented an accelerated CNA program in the summer for high school students. Rend Lake College will provide the CNA instructor, the local high schools will provide the students and the facility for the course, and Hamilton Memorial will provide the necessary books.

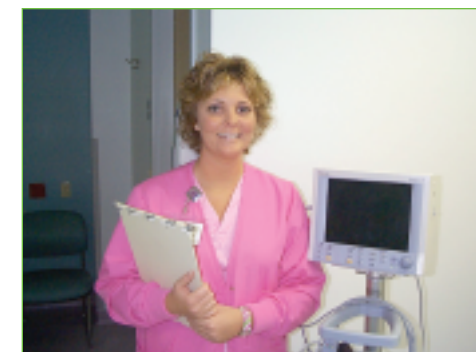
St. Mary's Good Samaritan, Inc.

The Mt. Vernon campus of St. Mary's Good Samaritan, Inc. (SMGSI) has implemented their Forgivable Loan Repayment program. This program pays the full cost of a two-year nursing program at Rend Lake College and requires a two-year work commitment after graduation. The loans pay for the entire nursing education, provide part-time employment and experience while attending school, and guarantee employment upon graduation. If a scholarship recipient fulfills their two-year obligation, the loan is forgiven. If a recipient fails to meet his/her two-year commitment, they must repay the full amount of the loan.

Additionally, the Centralia campus of SMGSI is setting up a faculty funding program with Kaskaskia College that will increase the enrollment capacity of the college. The college has established a coalition of health providers in the area which will share the responsibility of funding the salaries of faculty members at the college.

Harrisburg Medical Center

Harrisburg Medical Center (HMC) in Harrisburg is a progressive hospital with 86 beds and 46 physicians on staff. Ever



Emily Evans, RN in HMC's Ambulatory Care Unit participated in Harrisburg Medical Center's Educational Loan Program, graduating from Southeastern Illinois College. The hospital is very proud to have her be a part of their organization.

growing, the hospital recently completed an expansion which includes an Oncology & Infusion Unit, and a geriatric unit in Behavioral Health Services, which was added to their in-patient and our-patient behavioral health services.

HMC administers two ancillary clinics, Eldorado Primary Care and Gallatin County Schools Wellness Center.

Harrisburg Medical Center offers a \$5,000 per year scholarship program for five nursing students per year. In addition, the medical center pays the cost of the nursing board exams for graduation provided the student passes on the first attempt. The student is guaranteed a position upon graduation and must agree to work at HMC one year for every year of educational assistance.

Workforce Investment Act

Title I funds, under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, provide financial assistance to eligible adults who are 18 years of age or older, authorized to work in the US, compliant with Selective Service and have been recently laid off from a low growth occupation or are not currently sustaining a self-sufficient family income.

Through an Individual Training Account (ITA), the cost of tuition and fees for a one year nursing program and/or a two-year program could be funded. Funds may also be available to assist with supportive services such as mileage, day care and uniforms, if needed.

Look for our next article in the May issue of the Southern Business Journal where we will highlight St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital and Shawnee Community College. ■

Questions about the initiative?

Please feel free to contact these individuals if you have additional questions regarding the Critical Skill Shortages Healthcare Initiative:

Mr. John S. Rendleman,
for Mr. William Armstrong
Southern Illinois
Workforce Investment Board
P.O. Box 1727
Marion, IL 62959
Phone: 618/998-0970
E-mail: jrendleman@fmgr.com

Ms. Kathy Lively,
Executive Director
Man-Tra-Con Corporation
3000 W. DeYoung Street, Suite 800-B
Marion, IL 62959
Phone: 618/998-0970
E-mail: kathylicely@mantracon.org

Mr. Bill Jackson,
Chairman
Southern 14 Workforce
Investment Board, Inc.
P.O. Box 186
Carmi, IL 62821
Phone: 618/382-5024

Mr. Jim Murphy
Executive Coordinator
Southern 14 Workforce
Investment Board, Inc.
P.O. Box 186
Carmi, IL 62821
Phone: 618/382-5024
E-mail: dmurphy@shawneelink.net

Ms. Lucinda Pearce
Research & Development Analyst
Man-Tra-Con Corporation
3000 W. DeYoung Street, Suite 800-B
Marion, IL 62959
Phone: 618/998-0970, Ext. 226
E-mail: lucindapearce@mantracon.org

Ms. Zina Nolen
Special Projects Administrator
Man-Tra-Con Corporation
3000 W. DeYoung Street, Suite 800-B
Marion, IL 62959
Phone: 618/998-0970, Ext. 213
E-mail: zinanolen@mantracon.org

Mr. Cary Minnis
Healthcare Liaison
Man-Tra-Con Corporation
3000 W. DeYoung Street, Suite 800-B
Marion, IL 62959
Phone: 618/998-0970, Ext. 211
E-mail: CaryMinnis@mantracon.org



*This is the fifth of a year-long series of articles that will appear in the Southern Business Journal as part of the Critical Skill Shortages Initiative (CSSI). The Department of Commerce and Economic Development (DCEO) as part of the Governor's Opportunity Returns Initiative awarded the Southern Economic Development Region (SEDR) a Healthcare Training Grant to support projects aimed at decreasing the critical nursing shortage in southern Illinois. Representatives from healthcare, community colleges, business K-12 education, labor, economic development and workforce development participated in focus group & consortia committee meetings during the last year to plan and implement these important projects.