

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Implements Successful New Retention Effort

School At Work Provides Up to 8 Months of Training to Entry Level Workers for Job Advancement and Career Development

BY NANCY LLOYD

When Calamity Weaver began working at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta in the Environmental Services department, she immediately felt the impact of one of the organization's key values – nurturing.

On September 20, Weaver became one of the first six employees to graduate from School At Work (SAW), a program developed by Louisville, Ky.-based Catalyst Learning to provide job advancement, retention and career development for entry level workers.

With a team of caregivers and support staff 6,500 strong, Children's is on a journey to create a "people-focused culture" to engage and retain employees. The results are staggering. In a recent employee engagement survey, Children's scored 86 percent, compared to a national average of 60 percent. Children's also has benchmark retention rates, which include 90 percent overall and 93 percent for nursing, compared to a national average of 85 percent.

Children's understands that in today's



The inaugural Children's Healthcare of Atlanta School At Work class graduated September 20, 2006. Pictured l-r: David Burgess, Priscilla Moses, Donna Spaulding, Consuelo Hughes, Calamity Weaver, and Richard Martin.

hospital environment, all workers must be engaged in their jobs to accommodate the increasing patient load. Programs like SAW are undoubtedly helping pave the way for these record engagement and retention scores that Children's is experiencing.

By providing SAW to interested and qualified entry-level workers, Children's has placed an increased emphasis on retention and advancement of entry-level personnel into clinical, clerical, and support roles.

According to a study commissioned by Catalyst Learning in 2004, the average turnover costs are \$4,880 for a support employee, \$6,007 for a clerical employee and \$13,840 for a non-nursing clinical employee. As a not-for-profit organization, Children's must always be conscientious

stewards of dollars. Implementing tools to decrease turnover costs is one way to do just that.

Children's is already witnessing that SAW is having a measurable impact on its workforce. The program improves morale and overall job performance and prepares workers for continuing education in the field.

Weaver is just one example of students who feel empowered by the program.

"SAW has helped me to regain confidence in myself and my abilities," said Weaver, who recommends the program to anyone interested in refreshing their skills or moving further in the medical field. "It gives insight as to where and how far you can go with your education and your career."

The SAW "Building a Career Ladder in Healthcare" program is for hospitals that want to nurture and advance entry-level employees into higher-level positions. The SAW career ladder system uses the Internet, computer labs, DVD technology, and staff coaching to deliver instruction. Employees review the basic skills, improve their com-


puter proficiency and study medical terminology, medical ethics, and anatomy and physiology. Students also develop an individual career and learning plan, usually with the help of human resources and career development specialists. SAW has been used at over 115 hospitals in 18 states since 2002.

Children's implemented the program in January 2006 and is optimistic about the return on investment for the organization. SAW not only reduces turnover costs by promoting internal advancement, but it also prepares employees for continuing education in health care. This translates into a better-prepared workforce, which ultimately enables Children's to provide the highest quality patient care for families. Nurturing employees through programs such as SAW and helping them grow to their full potential is part of Children's journey to be a "people-focused culture." Investing into an employee's future at Children's is an investment into an employee who can make a difference in the life of a child. And that is the return on investment that matters most.

For more information about the SAW program at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, contact Nancy Lloyd, Manager, Clinical Staff Development, at (404) 785-7647.

Corrections

On page 10 of the October issue of Atlanta Hospital News, in the article "Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia Names New President", the first sentence should have read that Monye Connolly has been appointed President of Blue Cross Blue Shield, not of The Wellpoint Foundation.




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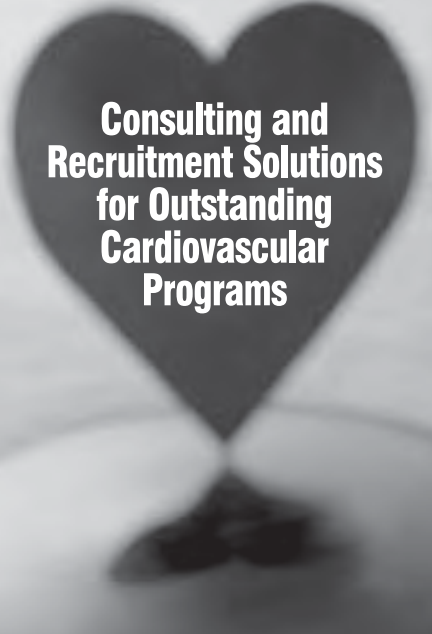


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