

CentralConnections

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Program gives students confidence, skills to succeed

Gina Libassi knew she wanted to pursue a new career, but wasn't sure exactly what.

"I wanted to go back to college, but I was afraid I might have lost some skills," she says.

Two of Libassi's Food and Nutrition co-workers suggested she try the hospital's School At Work (SAW) program, a free, on-site program designed to prepare staff in service and entry-level clerical positions for promotional opportunities or continuing education.

Developed by Catalyst Learning and provided by the hospital's Human Resources and Education & Development departments, SAW was introduced here last year. The eight-month program combines classroom instruction, online learning and help from coaches and career counselors. In addition to refreshing basic skills in math, reading, communication and grammar, students learn computer and organizational skills, basic medical terminology, anatomy and physiology.

SAW helped Linda Oushan brush up on some skills – particularly in math – and gave her some background in anatomy. Both have been particularly helpful in classes she's taking through Tunxis Community College to prepare for her future career as a pharmacy technician.

Oushan says she had considered going back to school before, but was a bit nervous. One of her Mercury Services co-workers told her about SAW and her Supervisor, Mark Spellacy, encouraged her to try the program. She's glad she did.

"This program has opened the doors to my future," says Oushan, a patient aide with Mercury Services for the past three years.

"Career exploration and planning is a key component of School At Work," says Jennifer Kazakewich, a Human Resources consultant and SAW coach. Throughout the program, students are responsible for developing their individual Career & Learning Plans, which they review regularly with their SAW coach. As part of the career exploration process, management and staff from various hospital departments were invited to speak to the SAW class about different career opportunities. Many students have since participated in job shadowing experiences in areas such as Nursing, Pharmacy and Admitting to further explore careers in which they are interested.



At a recent School At Work session are, l to r: Alice Green, Food and Nutrition; Lavetta Newton, Health Information Management; Elva Delgado, Lab; Jennifer Glatt, N5; and Michelle Pagani, Food and Nutrition.

To supplement the SAW Career & Learning Plan, the hospital was fortunate to receive funding from Capitol Workforce Partners to partner with career counselors from the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC).

In October Danielle Lewis, program manager of CREC's Career Assessment Services, spent a day with students and graduates, offering information on various careers, helpful Web sites and other tips. Participants also completed the Harrington-O'Shea Career Decision-Making System, a self-assessment designed to align participants' work values, interests and abilities with up to four different careers that students should explore further.

"Most of the students' results were very similar to career options that we had previously discussed in SAW. It was great for them to receive that positive reinforcement and encouragement," Kazakewich says.

Students and graduates spent the next two weeks completing additional career exploration assignments independently. Lewis and four of her staff members returned Nov. 5 to hold individual career counseling sessions with SAW students and graduates to help them set short- and long-term goals for their chosen careers.

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President's message

Making the world a better place

As we enter the heart of the holiday season, I'm once again inspired by the compassion and generosity of members of our hospital community.

Caring is part of our job at the hospital, but so many of you go above and beyond, for our patients and their loved ones.

Outside the hospital, you also give of your time, talents and resources through religious and nonprofit organizations that serve people in need throughout the community, nation and even the world.

Each fall, hospital employees support a wide variety of community organizations through donations to United Way. In December, many hospital employees "adopt" local families, supplying them with much-needed items like clothing and toiletries and the things that make the holidays special, like toys and other gifts.

Many of you mark the holidays by supporting organizations that offer food and shelter to the homeless; send gifts to our troops overseas; and provide free medical care.

At the Dec. 17 Corporators meeting, we'll present the Loretta Martinelli Community Service Award to an employee who exemplifies this spirit of giving. The award, named for a former member of the New Britain General Hospital board of directors, is given to a staff member who is not only dedicated to his or her work here, but makes a real difference in the community. Past recipients have been honored for their work with children, seniors, veterans, the poor and others in need.

The hospital has also benefitted from your generosity. During the holidays and throughout the year, many of you give to the hospital, by donating to fundraising appeals, making Tribute Gifts in honor or memory of loved ones, contributing to the annual appeal or supporting a special fund at the hospital. Your support allows us to continue our mission to offer the most advanced care to our Central Connecticut neighbors.

That mission includes providing medical care and services to people who might not otherwise be able to access and afford them.

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Four months into the SAW program, Libassi made one career move—from Food and Nutrition to Sterile Processing, where she's now a supply aide and pursuing her sterile processing certification. She says the Career Decision Making survey really helped her pinpoint her future career: ultrasound technologist.

"School At Work has been great," she says. "It showed me what abilities I have and because of that gave me the confidence to pursue college and a career."

Each year, the hospital provides millions of dollars of free care to patients in need. We also provide free services to people of all ages throughout the community, often in partnership with other community organizations. These services include the New Britain Asthma Initiative, which helps children with asthma and their families manage this challenging disease; the Nurturing Families Network and M.O.M.S. programs, which help young parents; the Connecticut Center for Healthy Aging, which offers many free services to seniors and their caregivers; and numerous others.

The hospital also partners with various other organizations for community-wide efforts aimed at ending homelessness, preparing young people for the workforce, and providing food to needy families.

Together, the hospital and our employees, physicians and volunteers have a tremendous impact. Thank you for everything you do, during the holidays and year-round, to make our community – and the world – a better place.



Laurence A. Tanner
President

Oushan says she's grateful for the SAW program and the encouragement she's gotten from Kazekewich and Spellacy.

"The School At Work program really changed my life," she says. "It's been such a door-opener for me."

She and Libassi are among the 10 employees in the 2008 SAW program. A graduation ceremony and reception are planned for Dec. 3.