

St. Anthony Employees Go Back to School — at Work

By Tom Clegg
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Jill Stemmerman, RN

Many of the nurses St. Anthony Hospital will hire in the next several years might already be working at the facility on Chicago's West Side.

Through a program called School at Work, St. Anthony Hospital is encouraging entry-level employees to advance their careers without leaving the hospital. The hope is that by rewarding employees who have been loyal to St. Anthony, they will return to work at the hospital after they have been educated as nurses or other healthcare workers.

Eighteen St. Anthony's employees are in the first class, which will graduate Aug. 13. Seven of them are in the CNA or LPN programs.

"I've got several unit secretaries who have either completed their CNA training or are about to complete it, and then they'll eventually become LPNs," says Vice President of Nursing Jill Stemmerman, RN, MS, CNA, BC. "They've been employees here at St. Anthony Hospital for a long time, and we want to retain them."

Two local community organizations, Central States SER and Instituto del Progreso Latino, have been important partners in St. Anthony's previous

workforce development efforts by helping bilingual nursing students as they progress in patient care.

“It’s important for us to have employees who are Spanish-speaking because many of our customers only speak Spanish,” Stemmerman says.

The eight-month program, which matches each employee to a mentor, consists of classes that meet once a week for two hours at the hospital. School at Work also helps workers get financial aid and allows those who might struggle in a college environment to prepare for obstacles they will encounter.

“This is an opportunity for them to iron out the kinks before they move on,” says Pamela Jones, workplace development manager at St. Anthony. “They’ve all made their college selections, and they’ve done their college-level entry exams. At the end of the day, the whole goal is get them into college.”

Tom Clegg is a member of the editorial team at Nursing Spectrum.

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