

Nursing students gain both knowledge and understanding at LAFC

A learning partnership

Hands-on learning in a community clinical setting is a vital component of a nursing student's education — so says, Bobbie Jurishica, a member of the nursing faculty and the clinical agency liaison at Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) and a volunteer at the Lake Area Free Clinic.

WCTC has been placing associate degree nursing students at the LAFC for their required clinical practice for the past three years. Two students per semester are placed at the Clinic where they see patients under the supervision of Clinic professional nursing staff over a six-week period.

“The students learn about giving back to the community and see what resources are available while

growing their own clinical knowledge,” said Jurishica.

The WCTC/LAFC partnership also benefits the Clinic. In addition to providing valuable volunteer manpower, WCTC gives back to the Clinic by donating resources in the form of nursing texts and reference books. The WCTC Student Nursing Club also recently conducted a supply drive that benefited the Clinic.

WCTC boasts several ties to LAFC. Both LAFC clinic administrator, Donna Voigt, and assistant administrator, Mary Reich, are WCTC nursing graduates. WCTC faculty members, Sally Christiansen (Coordinator, Community Health Education) and Sandra Stearns (Associate Dean, Nursing) also sit on LAFC's board of directors.



“The Clinic really opened my eyes to problems in the health care system,” said WCTC nursing student Casey Grulkowski



Grulkowski and her WCTC instructor, Patricia Burke, MS, RN, NP

One student's experience

When Casey Grulkowski listed her preferences for a required community clinical (hands-on experience in a clinical setting) as a third semester Waukesha Technical College nursing student, she was hoping to pick up some practical knowledge at an urgent care center. She ended up learning much more than that when she was assigned to the Lake Area Free Clinic for her clinical.

Along with the valuable clinical experience of seeing patients with a variety of conditions and illnesses, Gulkowski learned firsthand about this country's current health care crisis of the uninsured.

“I was unaware of how many people fall between the cracks — people who work and don't have health insurance but make too much to qualify for assistance

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and too little to afford health care,” Grulkowski explained.

Grulkowski was also impressed with the amount of resources that the Clinic is able to provide patients such as diabetic education, help with enrolling in patient assistance programs for free prescription drugs, referrals to community health resources and radiology services at ProHealth hospitals.

Grulkowski's faculty advisor, Patricia Burke, is equally enthusiastic about the Clinic's services. “We're excited to have this opportunity for students. We get such positive feedback about the Clinic from our students,” she said. In fact, Burke, a

nurse practitioner, is considering the possibility of volunteering at the Clinic herself.

When asked about her most valuable learning experiences, Grulkowski cited the variety of cases she has gotten the chance to learn about at the Clinic. “I've been exposed to many learning experiences,” she explained.

She has also learned a lot from the other, more seasoned volunteers at the Clinic. “All of the volunteers have been great,” she added. “Other medical personnel should consider volunteering.”

What will Grulkowski take away from her experiences at LAFC? “I know I will be more open-minded about patients and the challenges they face,” she concluded.



Some members of LAFC's "Thursday Crew" from left to right, Casey Grulkowski, Marti Klug, Tom Cable, Diane Hudson, Mary Reich and Laurie Kinzinger

Thursday Crew

Since LAFC opened its doors on Thursday evenings a year ago, a 'family' has formed among its tireless group of volunteers — the "Thursday Crew." Like the Tuesday night group, they really enjoy working together and serving the community and have developed a real camaraderie.

The Clinic is always looking for volunteers — especially nurses and physicians. Wouldn't you like to become a member of Thursday's (or Tuesday's) Crew and meet new friends? Call Jan Navin at 262-567-8738 for more information about volunteering.



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