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Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury to Offer Certified Nursing Assistant Training to Employees, Community Members

Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury will soon begin a new on-site training program that promises to benefit its own employees and others in the community who want to pursue careers in health care. In November 2010 the Virginia Board of Nursing approved RWC’s proposal to offer Certified Nursing Assistant training at the Irvington continuing care facility. The first class is scheduled to get underway in mid-February.

“Certified Nursing Assistants are becoming an increasingly important cadre of skilled caregivers in hospitals and assisted living facilities,” says Sandra Madison, RN, staff development coordinator at RWC. Typically, CNAs work under the supervision of a licensed nurse to help patients with daily living tasks such as dressing, grooming, and personal hygiene. They assist nurses with medical equipment and check vital signs for those in their care.

Additionally, CNAs provide important emotional and physical support. “This is especially important with older patients who are trying to cope with a loss of independence,” Madison adds.

The ten-week program will offer a mix of lectures, skills laboratories, and clinical practice. Students will attend classes for approximately 6-7 hours each day. A grant from a private foundation has underwritten operating costs for the program. For the past several months, RWC has been preparing renovating facilities and stocking up on supplies. Madison, who has been working at RWC for eleven years, will direct the course. She will be assisted by Tonya Waddy, LPN.

RWC employees who wish to participate in the program must be in good standing at the continuing care facility. Those applying from the community must submit an application that will include an essay and a list of references. Applicants must have completed high-school or have earned a GED. They will also have to agree to a background check and testing for drugs and tuberculosis.

There will be a charge for the course, but Madison expects that most who enroll will receive substantial financial assistance. Through a bequest, the RWC Foundation is able to provide scholarship support to RWC employees. Because the course has been approved by the Bay

Consortium Workforce Investment Board, others selected for the program may apply for grants from other sources.

Classes will be limited to ten students. Since RWC has already identified several employees who will be included in the first class, places for those not working at RWC will be limited. “We are taking applications now for the few places we will have in the first class,” says Madison. “However, we plan to offer additional classes in the future, and will be looking to admit more people from the community.”

Madison says she is now working to satisfy requirements that will allow RWC to become a testing site for students who complete CNA training. At present, those who complete the course must travel to an approved testing site in Richmond, Hampton, or other locations in the Commonwealth.

“We know the CNA course will demand much from students,” Madison says. “But working as a CNA can be a truly rewarding experience.” While most of the first graduates will continue working at RWC, Madison believes the program will give many individuals the skills they need to get jobs at other health-care facilities in the region.

Those interested in applying for the CNA program at RWC may contact Madison at 438-4059 to request an application and obtain additional information about the program.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Sandra Madison, RN (standing) and Tonya Waddy, LPN, prepare to receive the first class of CNA students at Rappahannock Westminister-Canterbury.