

A TRAINING PROJECT HELPS THE POOR

A Rural Healthcare Facility Offers Job Training, Gains Employees

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Many of our nation's poor cannot secure work because they do not have the skills for technical jobs, nor the resources to get the training they need. This is especially true in rural areas. At the same time many Catholic healthcare facilities face severe shortages of technical and professional personnel.

Saint Francis Medical Center in Grand Island, NE, which serves seven rural counties, found a way to help some of the areas's financially disadvantaged persons receive technical training and employment as it eased its own personnel shortage. With local job training and educational groups and a grant from the federal government, Saint Francis Medical Center launched the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program in January 1990.

SHRINKING LABOR FORCE

In the past five years, Saint Francis's employee recruitment budget has risen more than 1,000

Summary As poor Americans look for work, healthcare facilities face a shortage of workers. One facility, Saint Francis Medical Center in Grand Island, NE, found a way to help some of the area's financially disadvantaged persons receive technical training and employment as it eased its own personnel shortage.

Saint Francis leaders assembled a team of representatives from the hospital's staff, the Greater Nebraska Job Training Program, Lincoln, and Central Community College, Grand Island, to establish the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program. The team reviewed several job descriptions to help it decide which jobs to include in the program and surveyed area hospitals to ensure the positions selected were experiencing shortages.

percent. With few trained workers available in the Grand Island area (population 39,000), Saint Francis has increased the intensity and scope of its recruitment efforts. Like other hospitals in the area, it raised wages, offered scholarships to students, and provided hire-on incentives. However, these tactics did nothing to increase the supply of technical personnel Saint Francis needed.

Gloria Smith of the Greater Nebraska Job Training Program, Lincoln, approached Saint Francis leaders with the idea of the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program as a way to help the hospital solve its personnel shortage. Saint Francis leaders then assembled a team of representatives from the hospital's staff, the Greater Nebraska Job Training Program, and Central Community College, Grand Island, to:

- Develop a healthcare worker education program that would attract people living near or below the poverty level
- Ensure that persons entering the educational program had the aptitude and basic job skills nec-

The program received a grant as a demonstration project from the U.S. Department of Education.

After identifying participants who had the aptitudes and interests for the jobs, the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program arranged for participants' training and assistance with items such as tuition, child care, and transportation. Participants received training at Central Community College and at Saint Francis Hospital.

Saint Francis Medical Center deemed the program a success. The hospital has hired seven healthcare workers who would not have been available if they had not been trained through this program. Moreover, the program provides yet another way for the hospital to help fulfill a major portion of its mission: to help the poor.



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essary to train for entry-level healthcare positions

- Train the people selected so that their competencies matched available healthcare jobs
- Support the participants during the training program so that special problems (e.g., inadequate child care) did not interfere with their completing the program

The team reviewed several job descriptions to help it decide which jobs to include in the program. The team wanted to train persons for jobs that would allow them to earn a reasonable wage and would require no more than one year of training. The jobs chosen were licensed practical nurse (LPN), certified respiratory therapy technician, surgery technician, laboratory assistant, and histology technician.

The team completed a needs assessment by surveying area hospitals to ensure the positions selected were in fact experiencing shortages. The survey showed a great need for LPNs (30 current job openings, with more than 100 anticipated for the next three years). The other positions had fewer than 10 openings but projections of more in the future. Healthcare facilities clearly needed more personnel to fill these jobs.

As a consequence of the planning and development for this project, it became obvious that what started out to be a local solution had signifi-

cant implications for the nation. If successful, the program could provide at least a partial solution for the nation's shortage of healthcare workers and could provide a way for many poor persons to substantially improve their circumstances. Because of this, we wrote and submitted a grant to the U.S. Department of Education requesting funding for a demonstration project. The project was funded under the title Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations.

Although several of the participants already were receiving financial support from the Department of Social Services (DSS), some participants were unaware that they qualified for such support, and other participants had low incomes but did not qualify for a variety of reasons (e.g., they lived with parents). The Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program helped participants who qualified for DSS support to obtain it. The \$196,544 grant was used, along with DSS funds (when available), to pay for items such as tuition, books, fees, child care, transportation, uniforms, relocation, and utility deposits. Moreover, those participants who received on-the-job training at Saint Francis were paid for their work: Half their wages was paid by the grant, half by Saint Francis. Overall, total cost of the project was less than \$250,000.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Because the project was aimed at the poor, the team approached those agencies which could recommend poor persons in need of employment. The agencies contacted included Greater Nebraska Job Training, the Nebraska Department of Social Services, Job Service, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Displaced Homemakers program, and the U.S. Department of Labor. In addition, the team told other hospitals about the program and placed ads to recruit participants in local newspapers.

Through aptitude testing, interest questionnaires, and interviews, the team identified persons with the appropriate aptitudes and interests for the jobs. The college and the local Job Training office conducted employment testing, evaluating persons' job skills such as reading comprehension. Persons who completed the testing satisfactorily were referred to the human resources department at Saint Francis. Hospital staff interviewed them and, when appropriate, referred them to the director of the clinical department in which they would be trained. Each department director made the final determination for admittance to the program.

TRAINING

The Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program started with 39 participants—36 women



Joan Andrews, training as a histology technician through the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program, discusses her work with Lee Elliott, human resources director, Saint Francis Medical Center, Grand Island, NE.

and 3 men. The average participant was a 30-year-old, unmarried white woman with 1.7 children, 12.5 years of education, and a gross income of \$5,214. Many participants were receiving food stamps and financial help from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Participants intending to become licensed practical nurses entered the program at the community college. Persons studying to become certified respiratory therapy technicians took correspondence courses with guidance provided by Saint Francis employees. For all other participants, no curricula were available—it was necessary to develop curricula that, in most cases, involved courses taught by community college employees and Saint Francis employees through the community college. Saint Francis also provided on-the-job training. Saint Francis employees donated extra time worked while assisting the participants.

SUCCESS

In the Nebraska Department of Education's December 1990 interim review of the training program, Marge Harouff, assistant commissioner, Division of Education Services, noted:

Nebraska suffers from a serious shortfall of trained medical personnel. This project is providing economically disadvantaged persons with the opportunity to strengthen their self-esteem, prepare for productive employment, and assist in solving the work force crisis that we are facing in central Nebraska.

In her July 1991 final review of the program, Harouff added:

Each of these individuals will be able, as a result of the training, to more fully provide for the needs of their families and contribute positively to the economy of the state. This project demonstrates a coordination of services by various agencies that can be a model of coordination and collaboration for the state and the nation.

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SUCCESS STORIES

JOAN

Joan's struggle with everyday life had become depressing. Three of her five children still lived at home. Joan's income as a housekeeper was limited, and her husband's income was not steady. She couldn't pay her bills.

She entered the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program as a histology technician trainee. Because no curriculum was available at the community college, program coordinators developed one. The Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program provided Joan with books, tuition, and transportation to work and to school.

Joan has completed her training, is working at Saint Francis, and will be taking the examination from the American Society of Clinical Pathologists for certification. When asked about the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program, Joan said, "If it hadn't been for this program, I wouldn't be this far in life. It not only helped me with my education and job, but it also gave me the most valuable thing in life—my confidence. I am somebody now."

JENNIFER

Jennifer, a high-school dropout, lived in Grand Island, NE, with her husband and three children. Her husband had been unemployed for several months, and the family was receiving AFDC and food stamps. Jennifer had come to terms with the fact that she had to support her family because her husband was suffering from severe depression and his ability to reenter the work force was in question.

Jennifer learned about the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program from her Social Services case worker. She was accepted into the licensed practical nurse program at Central Community College in Grand Island; however, Jennifer could not afford to pay for child care, and the cost of a nursing uniform was overwhelming. The Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program was able to provide her with child care and a uniform. Jennifer said this program was a dream come true. She completed the program with a 3.5 (out of 4.0) grade point average and is currently employed as a licensed practical nurse.

Director

Institute of Advanced Leadership Development

CHA's Center for Leadership Excellence is seeking a director for its Institute of Advanced Leadership Development.

The part-time director will be responsible for the management of the institute, which will offer a multifaceted program for the development of leaders for Catholic healthcare. Working with appropriate universities and centers, the institute is charged with furthering the development of programs and resources that will enable leaders in Catholic healthcare to confront the challenges they face and to shape the future of Catholic healthcare from a perspective grounded in religious faith, personal spirituality, and professional competence.

The successful candidate must: understand healthcare as a ministry of the Church; demonstrate competence in educational administration, including skills in needs assessment, program development, and evaluation processes; understand adult learning principles and practices and the dynamics of faith development and spiritual growth; have the ability to assess, research, and develop resources; and be aware of the challenges and demands on healthcare leaders.

The director must be available to work in the institute's office in St. Louis in early 1993.

Send resume, by November 2, to Regina Clifton, executive director, The Center for Leadership Excellence, Catholic Health Association, 4455 Woodson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63134-3797 or call 314-253-3477.



THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES

TRAINING PROJECT

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program. Moreover, the program provides yet another way for the hospital to fulfill a major portion of its mission: to help the poor.

The program's success is also demonstrated by the higher-than-normal success rate: Sixty-five percent completed the program. Moreover, participants' income increased from an annual average of \$5,200 to more than \$17,000. Their increase in confidence and self-esteem has been obvious: Most were surprised they could be successful, and many have commented they now can look forward to the future with hope. Several participants are pursuing advanced healthcare careers, such as registered nurse.

MORE FUNDING

The Nebraska legislature recently concluded discussions about the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program. The legislators joined the federal government and the Sisters of Charity Health Care Systems, of which Saint Francis Medical Center is a member, in funding this program for the state of Nebraska. A partnership has been established that includes the lieutenant governor of Nebraska, the Nebraska Department of Health, Job Training, Social Services, community colleges, and several hospitals. Recruiting for new participants has started. □

Anyone who wishes to learn more about the Rural Allied Medical Business Occupations program is invited to write or call Lee Elliott, Human Resources Director, Saint Francis Medical Center, PO Box 9804, Grand Island, NE 68801, 308-389-5620.