

## First BWH School at Work Class Graduates



From left, Beverley Sobers, Alba Iris Garcia, Geoff Vercauteren, Katrina Harris, Charlotte Danielczyk, Patricia Fuller-Murray, Sandra Jarrett and Lisa Ponton celebrate the graduation.

Last week, the six students enrolled in BWH's first School at Work (SAW) class celebrated their graduation—an event sure to be followed by each one's college graduation in a few years.

"Fortitude will get you exactly what you want," Lisa S. Ponton, JD, vice president of Human Resources, told the students, their managers and colleagues gathered at One Brigham Circle to celebrate eight months of hard work. "And we will stand with you as you move forward."

BWH began offering the School at Work program to employees last fall as a comprehensive career and education development program that helps prepare employees to go back to school and advance their careers. BWH is one of only 385 hospitals in the country that offer this program.

Student speaker Charlotte Danielczyk said that after 15 years as a medical secretary, the last four of which have been in the Vascular Diagnostic Lab, she longed to pursue a college degree. "I wondered how I would find the time, money and support," she said. "I also wondered if I could tolerate the classroom environment again."

But when she attended the first class last fall, she knew School at Work would be different as she saw five other women who work at BWH and have busy lives at home—just like her.

"We had great support," she said, noting that the step-by-step process and variety in subject material was helpful. "I feel positive about moving forward."

With confidence, Danielczyk is planning to enroll in an associate's degree program in medical radiography in hopes of becoming a vascular sonographer in the department she currently works in.

Deb Hand, manager of the Vascular Diagnostic Lab, told the students that she knows how difficult it is to go back to school. "As you move on to your college careers, keep smiling," she said. "And you will always have support here."

Geoff Vercauteren, career coach and teacher of the SAW class, will continue to offer support to the students. He urged them to keep up their momentum and move forward to pursue their goals. Five of the six have plans to take college classes and continue their education. Beverley Sobers, director of Workforce

Development, thanked both the students and their managers, who enabled them to attend the classes during work. "Continue to reach for the career you've always dreamed of," Sobers told the students.

"SAW gave us all the opportunity to move forward," Danielczyk said. "And I think I speak for all my classmates when I say it's never too late to start."