

Menorah Medical Center offers School at Work program

Written by linda-friedel-contributing-writer
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Graduates from a new program at Menorah Medical Center said the education they received opened a door into their future.

“Pursue and go higher,” said Cameron Nash, an operating room assistant at Menorah Medical Center.

Cameron, along with his twin brother, Brandon Nash, a gastroenterology technician, and Lisa Watson, a radiology transporter, graduated in a class of seven from Menorah’s first School at Work program this year. Menorah and other HCA Midwest Health Systems hospitals offer the program to employees who go through an application and interview process.

The program, which covers computer literacy, writing, math, English, medical terminology, physiology and anatomy, is a career development course targeted at entry-level health care workers.

“It was an opportunity I couldn’t pass up,” Cameron said. “There was a door I just had to go through.”

Cameron said the program challenged him and gave him an opportunity to shadow as a patient care technician, where he fills in after his shift and on weekends. Cameron, who was hired the same day as his identical twin eight years ago, both in the hospital’s cafeteria, said the weekly eight-month program created camaraderie among participating employees.

Cameron, Brandon and Watson all said they plan on pursuing nursing degrees. Watson credits the program for inspiring her to go into nursing.

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“It gives you an open door to learn so much more about the health care industry,” Watson said.

Steve Wilkinson, chief executive officer of Menorah Medical Center, said School at Work combines education and career planning and allows graduates to advance their careers. The first session of the School at Work program went above and beyond the hospital’s initial expectations he said.

“The metamorphosis witnessed firsthand in employees such as Nash and Watson was inspiring,” he said. “(School at Work) instills confidence in employees who desire to further themselves on the job path.”

Before the School at Work program Brandon worked in the hospital’s radiology department as a transporter. Through School at Work, he shadowed in the GI department. Tammy Snelson, nursing director for outpatient services, hired Brandon as a technician.

“We recognized Brandon had innate people skills,” Snelson said. “That’s something we can’t teach. We can teach employees specific jobs, but not interpersonal attributes.”

Brandon said his new position, where he assists physicians and cleans instruments, is working out well, but he doesn’t plan to stop there. He said he set his sites set on earning a degree in nursing.

“They have all the good jobs. You can go anywhere in the world,” he said. “There is a lot of need for nurses today.”

Jeneen Rockhold, director of patient relations and Student at Work coach, said the course supports the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations national patient safety goals, improves effectiveness of communication between caregivers and response to changes in a patient’s condition. She said besides Menorah, other local HCA Midwest Hospitals who have participated in the School at Work program include Research Medical Center, Centerpoint Medical Center, Allen County Hospital, Lee’s Summit Medical Center and Overland Park Medical Center.

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Menorah's next School at Work Program starts in January. Nationally 26 HCA sites are expected to start within the next two months.

"Graduates are able to align personal goals with that of the organization and have a better understanding of how they impact the 'big picture,'" Rockhold said.