

SAW Opens Doors



'School at Work' pilot program enriches UMHS employees



Ten members of the Health System's service staff recently spent 36 weeks in the classroom, and emerged with knowledge of health care, higher math and reading skills, and general confidence in their ability to succeed.

Employees from Laundry Services, Environmental Services, Entrance Services and

Materials Services were selected as students for the Health System's pilot program of "School at Work." SAW was developed to provide skills in a variety of areas while building and promoting career ladders in health care. It aims to launch employees to higher-paying positions and give them the preparation to enter college and further their education.

Steve Raymond, Operations and Support Services' director for leadership and staff development, coached the 10 participants through SAW while they learned medical terminology and improved math, reading and people skills. The program also taught participants about health care careers.

Candy Jones, a classifier in Laundry Services, decided to attend the SAW course just to see if she could do it. During the class, she discovered an interest in becoming a sonographer at U-M. "I see myself continuing my education," Jones says.

"People that are going through it have a real sense of accomplishment," Raymond says.

SAW will help open the door for UMHS employees to attend college, which means advancing to higher-paying jobs at U-M where they can contribute even more. "This program benefits the whole health system," says Raymond. "The main thing that I've noticed is a higher level of self-confidence."

The three employees from Environmental Services who attended SAW made the commitment to participate for the whole 36 weeks, says Linda Little, their supervisor. In turn, the class made them more committed to their jobs at Environmental Services.

"I would like for more of our custodians to be able to participate in the future," Little says.

Jessica Nichols, a custodian and one of Little's employees, did not think she was interested in the medical field, but decided to take the course just to see what's out there. She emerged with a plan to become an X-ray technician.

Raymond worked in collaboration with others during the three-year project to establish SAW at the Health System, including:

Kathy Jordan-Sedgeman, Labor Relations •

Rolando Croocks, Laundry Services •

Angela Dameron, AFSCME bargaining chair •

Gloria Peterson, local union president •

Organizers say they plan to continue offering the SAW program.

For additional information about SAW email Steve Raymond at raymonds@umich.edu.

Written by Haley Otman