

SAW Helps Houston Hospital Enhance Career and Educational Opportunities *Monday, May 17, 2004 By: Rod Rice*

Hospitals across the country are trying to stem the flow of employees who leave their positions to get a better job somewhere else. A Houston hospital that encourages its employees to advance their careers by going to "school at work."

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In fact it's called "School At Work" or SAW. The program is designed to give lower level employees a chance to further their education while on the job. They must pass a qualifying test and then attend classes for several hours a week for eight months. Houston's VA hospital is one of six area hospitals using the SAW program.

Ralph Devaul, a training specialist at the VA hospital, says most classes at other hospitals consist of about a dozen students. At Houston's VA hospital 35 people qualified for the classes the hospital decided to accept them all. Leroy Bailey is a housekeeping aide. He wanted to further his education but put it aside because he needed a job. Now he's working toward a goal.

At the VA hospital SAW is more than just an educational program. Lenise Marshall Harvey says she's made good friends and found child care support from others in the program. Even so, hitting the books again is a challenge.

Charles Neal Sr. has worked at the VA hospital for 26 years, long enough to know an opportunity when he sees it and forward thinking enough to take advantage of it.

Ralph Devaul says there are hundreds of hospitals across the country using SAW and he says that the students at the Houston VA hospital have some of the highest grades in the nation.

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