

Boston resident Patricia Myers thriving in health care

Three years ago, Patricia Myers was unemployed, with little hope of finding a job.

Today, she is working as a sterile processing technician in the operating room (OR) of Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), where she is responsible for making sure surgical instruments are cleaned, decontaminated, assembled, wrapped and sent for sterilization after each procedure.

Myers took advantage of the **Partners in Career and Workforce Development Program (PCWD)**, a three-year-old initiative that has helped nearly 600 Boston residents get entry-level jobs or climb the career ladder in three Partners HealthCare hospitals — MGH, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. The five-week program consists of a classroom component and an internship at one of the hospitals.

Cynthia Briggs, director of PCWD, called the program a “win-win for Partners,” because it enables the hospital to offer viable solutions for two problems at the same time.

“This is clearly a win-win for Partners,” Briggs said. “We are able to fill entry-level openings with job-ready candidates while fulfilling our mission to serve the community by offering Boston residents opportunities for economic advancement.”

Once upon a time, Myers was one such resident. When she came across the PCWD flyer at the offices of the state Department of Transitional Assistance, Myers’s food stamps had run out and she was looking for ways to get back into the workforce. She described the staff of PCWD as “miracle workers” who have helped her with career coaching, housing, transportation and a host of other barriers. Myers’s manager, Carlene Krey, was impressed with her motivation and her ability to learn new skills quickly during her internship phase. Krey hired Myers shortly after graduating from the program, and Myers hasn’t stopped moving since.

She completed a certificate program in central processing in December 2006 free of charge and is now working in a different department within the OR. She is taking on new challenges, including working with new and more complex instruments, meeting with vendors and preparing the OR for more complicated surgeries, like knee and hip replacements.

In collaboration with the three hospitals, Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) **and Project Hope**, Partners runs the PCWD pre-employment program four times a year, accepting 10-12 participants in each cycle. Applicants should be Boston residents who have graduated high school, have at least one year of work experience and are interested in a career in health care.

The first two-and-a-half weeks of training take place in a classroom setting and include training on customer service skills, medical terminology, resume writing and interviewing skills. The students then intern within the Partners hospitals as office assistants, operating room instrument technicians, laboratory aides and other entry-level positions.

After graduation, PCWD graduates receive job placement assistance and ongoing support, both in their career development and in tackling work-life balance issues such as housing and childcare advocacy.

For more information on the PCWD program, visit www.partners.org/pcwd.

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