

Through Partners workforce program, Chambers returns to the work she loves



Monique Chambers (center), a recent graduate of the Partners in Career and Workforce Development Program (PCWD), is working at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, a member of Partners HealthCare. Chambers' manager, Dianne Lamb (right), describes her as "enthusiastic and customer-focused." Oswald Mondejar (left), vice president of human resources for Partners Continuing Care, calls PCWD "an important business and community investment." (Photo courtesy of Partners HealthCare)

Monique Chambers, a single mother of two, had left her job in the hotel industry after six years to care for her infant. After trying to make ends meet and receiving aid from the state Department of Transitional Assistance, Chambers was anxious to get back into the workforce, and although her experience was in the hotel industry, her heart was in health care.

While working in a nursing home during her high school years, Chambers developed a strong interest in caring for others. A friend of hers had just completed the Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD) pre-employment program and urged Chambers to apply. She enrolled in the program in May 2007.

Chambers interned at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in the admissions department and, according to Joan Jennings, RN, she hit the ground running. "She just gets it," said Jennings, Chambers' internship manager, referring to the newcomer's immediate understanding of the patient admitting and bed management process. Chambers was eager to learn and quickly completed tasks as they were assigned.

After graduation, she was hired in the same department as an administrative assistant and tour coordinator. Her new manager, Dianne Lamb, describes Chambers as a quick study.

"This is an extremely fast-paced environment and Monique knows how to prioritize and juggle a multitude of tasks and demands," said Lamb. "She is in a very visible position and is enthusiastic, customer-focused and functions as a high-level executive assistant."

While her supervisors speak of her in glowing terms, Chambers returns the favor when talking about the program that gave her the chance to shine.

"The PCWD program provided this wonderful opportunity for me to get back into the health care field — I was able to see how transferable my skills were from the hotel industry to health care,"

she said. “PCWD provided such a strong support system throughout the five weeks and continues to be there when I need them. They have helped me overcome hurdles such as childcare and regularly check in with me to keep me on track.”

In collaboration with Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) and Project Hope, Partners HealthCare runs the pre-employment program four times a year and accepts 10-12 participants in each cycle. The majority of participants are Boston residents, and all have graduated high school, have at least one year of consecutive work experience and are interested in a health care career.

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 system as office assistants, operating room instrument technicians, laboratory aides and other entry-level positions.

After graduation, each graduate receives job placement assistance. Following their placement, PCWD continues to support their career development and helps them with work-life balance issues, such as housing and childcare advocacy.

As her supervisors can attest, Chambers’ enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to her job are clearly evident. Serving as something of a role model for new PCWD participants, Chambers encourages them to “try and learn as much as possible and put [their] best foot forward.” Oswald Mondejar, vice president of human resources for Partners Continuing Care, summed the PCWD program as “an important business and community investment.”

“It is truly a win-win for all — for the individual, an opportunity for hands-on work experience in health care; for the manager, a way to leave a legacy by mentoring and coaching a new employee; and for the business, a cost-effective way to recruit and retain our future workforce,” he said. “For us, PCWD is creating employment opportunities ... it’s the perfect vehicle.”

PCWD is a community benefit program of Partners HealthCare. Partners HealthCare is a not-for-profit network of hospitals, physicians, health centers and other health care entities founded by Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital.

Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital is one of the largest rehabilitation facilities in the United States. A teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School, it is a member of Partners HealthCare. Spaulding is the only rehabilitation hospital in New England ranked since 1995 by US News and World Report in its Best Hospitals survey.