Charles Auer/Freeman Staff

Greenfield High School student Collette Badora reacts as a beach ball bounces out of control while she participates with classmates in a experiential therapy exercise with Mike Hoelzer of Rogers Memorial Hospital. The game has four or more people collaborate to bounce a ball on a drum and is used in therapy sessions. Students from around southeastern Wisconsin high schools visited the health careers fair to learn about a variety of health care jobs available.

Many futures in health care

Expo promotes careers in industry faced with labor shortage

By Lauren Anderson
Freeman Staff

PEWAUKEE — As the field faces a looming labor shortage, health care leaders made the case to high school students on Tuesday that — whatever their interests — there's a place for them in the industry.

More than 450 students from nine high schools convened at Waukesha County Technical College for a "Many Futures in Health Care" career expo, a first-time event hosted by the college, Waukesha County Business Alliance and local health care providers.

The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about the wide variety of career opportunities within the health care industry. Students had the opportunity to talk with doctors, nurses, surgeons, behavioral health specialists, physical therapists, lab technicians, social workers and others about what they could expect in such careers, along with representatives of the 10 higher education institutions represented at the fair.

Many of the booths featured interactive elements, like an ambulance, an opportunity for students to try their hand at CPR, a surgery simulator and behavioral therapy ball exercise.

"It's organized a little bit differently than a traditional career fair," Waukesha County Business Alliance Vice President Amanda Payne said. "... We wanted to focus on exposing students to the types of careers that are available to them in health care and what the career pathways might be. You may start as a CNA and then move into another type of nursing and then continue moving on through your career path.

"It's about exposure to careers and talking about what it would be like to be in those careers."

Rather than separating health care representatives by their place of employment, organizers instead grouped them together based on eight areas of interest — including emergency room, therapy, health center departments of interest, allied health care careers, technology in health care, locations for health care, hospital departments of interest, business administration and operations, and emergency care.

"It's really cool to see them working together," Payne said. "Because they all have the same goal, which is to get kids interested in health care careers."

The industry faces unique workforce challenges in the coming years, as employees from the Baby Boomer generation retire.

"What's doubly challenging for health care is that health care is also going to have to take care of the aging population ," he said. "So for health care, they get hit twice because a lot of their workforce is retiring, but those who are retiring are going to need more and more health care."

It's a pressing problem, but that's where students like Myah Weber come in. The Waukesha West High School junior is interested in emergency medicine and getting the chance to see an ambulance up close piqued her interest.

"It's gotten me more interested, just seeing how everything works," Weber said.

Rose Lawson, also a junior at West, has an interest in occupational therapy and said the fair opened her eyes to the various career options within health care.

"It's cool to see how everything branches off from one another," Lawson said.

That was a message Katie LaDue, an registered nurse with Bridges Home Healthcare, tried to get across to students.

"You can do anything in nursing," she said, "from patient care to infants to the elderly to everything in between."

Email: landerson@conleynet.com

Copyright © 2016 Conley Group. All rights reserved 03/16/2016
March 16, 2016 7:16 am (GMT +5:00)
Powered by TECNAVIA