

Foundations Boost Barton's Nursing Faculty With Matching Grants

Story by: Linda Jerke

A year and a half after helping secure matching grant funds to bolster Barton Community College's nursing faculty, representatives of Central Kansas Medical Center and Clara Barton Hospital Foundations and the Barton Community College Foundation toured the College's new nursing facility and met the new faculty member whose position was made possible by the grant.

Andrea Thurber, Barton's new Nursing Remediation and Healthcare Programs Coordinator, joined the college's nursing faculty in March and is making strides in her new role as tutor for the nursing students and as coordinator of adult healthcare and continuing nursing education. She tutors nursing students in math and other nursing-related subjects, and soon she will be overseeing the college's growing patient simulator lab program.

The hospital representatives discussed the growing need for medical personnel and the importance of Barton's role in supplying qualified nurses to the medical community. With increasing needs for more patient services, including ancillary services, both CKMC and Clara Barton Hospital representatives said they realize their provision of matching funds to boost Barton's nursing faculty is an investment for the medical community. The hospitals will reap the benefits through a larger pool of qualified nurses in the area.

Thurber worked as a registered nurse at Northwest Medical Center-Benton County in Bentonville, Ark., for three-and-a-half years before coming to work at Barton. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from Southwestern College in Winfield and she plans to earn a master's degree in nursing. She originates from Oxford, Kan., a small community located west of Winfield.

In her years as a hospital nurse, she would care for six or seven patients at a time and she liked her nursing experience, Thurber said, but when she started helping with training new nurses at the hospital, she realized what she wanted to do with her career. "I like to teach new skills and how to do things effectively and efficiently," she said. "When this job came to my attention, I thought it would be the perfect way to see into the nursing college atmosphere."

She came to Barton and found out the job was just what she had in mind. By the same token, Barton's Nursing Education Director Linda Gobin found the right person for her department's new nurse educator position.

Making such a good fit possible, the grant provides for the new position salary and supplements the salaries of each of the remaining six nursing instructors for Barton's program, Gobin explained. The funding is being distributed in yearly amounts over a period of nine years, which started in 2007, she said.

For the new position, finding someone familiar with the college's new simulator technology was not an issue, since on-the-job training is provided, Gobin said. Thurber is receiving training on patient simulators now, and this fall she will be helping with the simulation labs as part of her training.

Funds from the matching grant also have provided some of the nursing supplies for student use in simulation and practice. In touring Barton's new nursing facility completed last year, foundation members were able to see how the computerized patient simulators are used in two labs.

The OB-Pediatric lab has an adult and baby simulator, an area that replicates a birthing room for simulation, and one pediatric computer module. The assessment lab has adult simulators for checking patients' vital signs and sounds. Both labs are equipped just as they would be in a real hospital setting with rooms enclosed by retractable curtains.

With her simulation training, Thurber will have the ability to use computer input to signal the simulation of various symptoms for her students to assess and to test her students on their assessments. Another part of her job is coordinating the college's healthcare training and continuing nursing education courses, which provide the education needed to maintain high-quality patient services given by nurses, nurse aides and other healthcare professionals in local and area hospitals.