

A hospital is like a small city, with its doctors, nurses, administrators, cooks, facility workers and patients.

And, like any city, a hospital needs volunteers.



Central Washington University student Theresa Cohoe volunteers through a job shadowing program at the Snoqualmie Valley Hospital.

Snoqualmie Valley Hospital launched a volunteer services unit headed by coordinator Carol Waters July 1. The hospital already has nine volunteers and 11 volunteers undergoing the screening process.

Waters invited high school students, college students and adults to volunteer. Students aged 14 to 18 can enroll in the Student Volunteer Program, which not only helps youth discover and develop their talents, but also get community service hours.

For more information or to obtain an application, contact Waters at 206-795-0361 or [carolw@snoqualmiehospital.org](mailto:carolw@snoqualmiehospital.org).

Thus far, Waters is thrilled with the hospital's volunteering crew.

"They're absolutely amazing," Waters said.

Theresa Cohoe, a 21-year-old resident of Sammamish who attends Central Washington University, volunteers so she can get experience relating to her major of nutrition and dietetics. For the past few weeks, Cohoe has shadowed Registered Dietician Gaye Gouk.

"A lot of it was applying what I learned in class," Cohoe said, describing her job interviewing patients about their dietary likes and needs.

She also attends team meetings, when doctors in different departments convene to discuss a patient's case.

"It's kind of cool to see how everybody works together," Cohoe said.

Waters wants her volunteers to see as many aspects of the hospital as possible. Volunteers might find themselves in the medical records division, with the purchasing materials manager, helping with the facilities and more.

"These volunteers, when they go out into the real world, it's important they realize there are no menial tasks," Waters said. "They will have the opportunity to see all of the departments working together."

The volunteers will also get to know the patients, keeping them company, reading to them and playing games to help pass the time.

Volunteer Tania Lichtenwalter, another Sammamish resident who studies nursing at Bellevue College, helps make patients comfortable by bringing them snacks or changing their bed sheets.

"It really just gave me a reality check to see what nursing is like," Lichtenwalter said.

Volunteers can entertain patients in other ways. Gabe Kangas, a freshman at Mount Si High School, will play the piano for patients in the hospital's lobby this fall. Other volunteers will be stationed at the hospital's front doors to help direct patients and their families to the right department.

Any volunteers who work directly with patients will be closely supervised.

Waters plans to reward the volunteers with tours of the hospital's various departments, including the pharmacy and radiology sections.

Before starting the program, Waters researched the volunteer units at several other hospitals, before implementing the practices that would best fit Snoqualmie Valley Hospital. If a volunteer application lands on her desk, Waters funnels it into the appropriate program. For example, if there are volunteers pursuing pre-med, Waters will match them with the hospital's job shadowing program.

Applying volunteers must go through a screening process that includes a background check, drug test and TB test, among other requirements.

Once their application is cleared, Waters requests that volunteers spend at least four hours per week for three months at the hospital. So far, the time requirement is anything but a problem. Most volunteers want to spend more time at the hospital, learning more about the behind-the-scenes work.

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