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Counseling counselors on health care careers

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MACOMB - The job of a high school guidance counselor relies heavily on advising students toward a career path. Thanks to the Healthcare Workforce Counselor Academy, students will be provided a better understanding of the career opportunities in the health care field.



The event was held Wednesday at McDonough District Hospital, and included a full day of presentations and discussions between those in the healthcare industry and area high school guidance counselors.

David Torbert/Journal Photo-Bridget McCarte, of the Illinois Hospital Association, made a presentation to area high school guidance counselors on Wednesday at the Healthcare Workforce Counselor Academy at McDonough District Hospital. Counselors also engaged in panel discussions with area healthcare employers and educators about the various career opportunities available.

"It's really an opportunity for the guidance counselors to come in and listen about health careers, schooling, and future opportunities for students," said Bruce Western, a recruiter at MDH.

To help get an idea for the areas of healthcare employment that are lacking, the recruiters toured MDH and were subjected to those occupations that are in need of professionals.

To better inform the guidance counselors of the wide variety of career opportunities, Bridget McCarte of the Illinois Hospital Association gave a presentation on specific careers and their educational requirements.

In addition, local healthcare facilities participated in a panel discussion that was geared toward again informing the counselors of some of the occupations that are dwindling in terms of employment.

"I think it's incredible for guidance counselors to take this information back to students," Western said. "I've already heard guidance counselors this morning saying that they didn't know some of the things we covered, so it's great that they can educate their students and hopefully plant a seed so they can get involved in healthcare."

Those healthcare facilities included The Elms Nursing Home, Graham Hospital, Memorial Hospital (Carthage), and MDH.

Going away to college to learn is often a great experience, but another purpose of Wednesday's event was to keep high school seniors from going too far away to get the same medical training that is available within the immediate region.

"Folks from the education institutions from around the area such as community colleges wanted to discuss the different healthcare learning opportunities in this general area," said Blanche Shoup, who is the director of the Workforce Investment Board. "So folks wouldn't have to travel, they could just stay in the area if that's what they wanted to go to school for."

The education panel discussion included schools such as Carl Sandburg Community College, MDH School of Radiographic Technology, and Spoon River College.

"We felt that this partnership with employers and educators helps everyone understand what there is here, and what potential there is for the future," said Shoup.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the healthcare industry is expected to be the fastest growing industry over the next eight years, which means plenty of opportunities for students that make the jump into the healthcare field.