
Confluence Health Invests in the Healthcare Leaders of Tomorrow

Wenatchee, WA: It all started 8 years ago when Ceci Wood, volunteer service manager at Confluence Health, attended a conference on the east coast. Returning to the Pacific Northwest, she asked her boss at the time, JoEllen Colson, if they could start a similar program at Confluence Health. Colson, who now serves as the vice president for ancillary services, agreed.

“I remember thinking that this sounded like an excellent new opportunity for Confluence Health to better reach out to and support students thinking about joining the healthcare profession,” reflected Colson. “So I gave Ceci the green light.”

It started small and often needed donations to help cover program costs. But despite the challenges, in 2016 Confluence Health welcomed its first cohort of 14- to 15-year-old students. In a tip of the hat to the popular television series, the program was named Caring Student Interns, or CSI for short. Initially only 16 students, the program has grown to 24 and has welcomed participants from Wenatchee, East Wenatchee, Entiat, Cashmere, and Waterville, priding itself on welcoming a wide number of students from all backgrounds, public or privately educated, who have an interest in the medical field.

“This is such a great program,” agreed Tracey Kasnic, chief nursing officer at Confluence Health and the executive sponsor of the camp this year. “We’re always so pleased to have the students get a chance to see what goes on within healthcare in a really unique way.”

Though the COVID-19 health crisis forced the program to take a two-year hiatus, the program was back this year with a new group of enthusiastic participants, and an equally excited group of Confluence Health teams who worked to connect with the students.

“What is so great is the buy-in we see from the teams that participate,” commented Wood. “Getting to talk excitedly about their jobs not only inspires students – some of whom later credit CSI for inspiring them to go into healthcare – but stirs something powerful in the teams. It sparks a renewed passion in their work, making us all better.”

To help make the learning come alive, the program focuses on a diverse number of on-site, hands-on experiences and the opportunity work alongside nurses, caregivers, and even Confluence Health leadership to better learn about the profession and understand the various paths to entering the field. Student Coordinator Casey Vogt, who works with Wood to put on the program, says that one of the major goals is to not only expose students to various pathways to these careers, but also to champion the diversity of the various jobs in healthcare, helping students and parents alike to realize that there are jobs such as radiological technician or case manager in addition to the more well-known jobs such as nurse and physician.

“CSI reminds people of the amazing variety of jobs in healthcare, and the numerous paths to get there,” added Vogt. “It’s great to see the spark it inspires in all who participate, from students to adults.”

Activities for the students range from working with prosthetics to going through scenarios with Human Resources to role playing in case management with fictional scenarios based on Star Wars universe characters. The ultrasound

department chimed in this year with lessons about sound featuring references to the famous “rippling water in a cup” scene in the film *Jurassic Park* and others helped grow bacteria in petri dishes from an exercise swabbing surfaces to learn about germ spread.

And, of course, no medical profession-focused camp would be complete without an opportunity for dissecting. This year students had the chance to dissect animal eyes, brains, and even hearts, with some help and participation from Confluence Health administrators who joined in the activity.

“It was great to experience the curiosity and excitement that these students brought to this event,” commented Dr. Jason Lake, chief medical officer, who helped during the heart dissection activity. “Confluence Health is proud to help foster their passion for science and introduce them to health-related professions.”

About Confluence Health

Confluence Health serves the largest geographic region of any healthcare system in Washington State, covering over 12,000 square miles of Okanogan, Grant, Douglas, and Chelan counties. Confluence Health is one of only two locally-lead healthcare systems in the state with the purpose of maintaining availability and access to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare services for North Central Washington. The Confluence Health Board of Directors provides governance for Confluence Health, the Clinic, Central Washington Hospital, and Wenatchee Valley Hospital, and includes nine community board members and six physician board members.

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