

Immigrant nurses earn winning opportunity

WIN program breaks language barriers, decreases nursing shortage

Cyndee Mady
CO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Though the nursing shortage is prevalent in Oregon, the recently founded Workforce Investment with Immigrant Nurses program (WIN) will help immigrant nurses gain the proper credentials to practice nursing in the United States and help alleviate the shortage.

"It's an incredible opportunity for this diverse group of people," said Alice Goldstein, ESL (English as a Second Language) department chair.

"Nurses come to America to do what they have been trained to do, and they can't do anything with their skills because of the language and cultural barriers," said Goldstein. "When you can develop a program where people can overcome these issues, it is a great service."

WIN is funded by a grant from Northwest Health Foundation, who awarded Clackamas \$200,000 for two years last October. By the end of the month, a general information session was opened to the public.

"We were expecting maybe 30 to 50 people and we had over 200," said Nursing Coordinator for WIN Judy Anderson.

A screening process eliminated three-fourths of the hopefuls, allowing the 50-60 remaining applicants

to have one-on-one interviews. Eligibility requirements included English speaking skills, Visa status, credentials, interest, availability and commitment to the program.

The nurses who were selected for WIN represent 20 countries, including Russia, Ukraine, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Japan, China, the Philippines, Germany and various Latin countries, to name a few.

"The individuals in the WIN program are some of the most remarkable people I have ever met. They have overcome challenges many of us only read about in the paper," said WIN Program Director William Frank.

"Once they were all nurses, helping and healing in their own countries of origin. Now the WIN Program is lending a helping hand to those who have come [to America] with their dreams of helping others," he said.

All of the nurses in the WIN program live in Oregon and have graduated from a nursing program at a university in their own country. Many have tried to pass the nurse licensing exam in the U.S., but could not overcome the cultural and language differences. WIN is designed to help prepare immigrant nurses for the exam.

"They will have intense English for two terms and then begin the 15-week nursing program in the summer," said Anderson.



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The Workforce Investment with Immigrant Nurses program (WIN) meets evenings in DeJardin Hall. (Back row from left) Ramone Figueras, Instructor Joe Ponce, Mahnaz Alidoosti, Anna Vasina. (Front row from left) Natalya Khamitova, Noriko Young, Vera Menkova and Larysa Tremaine participate in WIN.

"After they pass the nursing licensure exam, they have three months of closely supervised practice in a hospital."

Although participants in WIN already practiced nursing in their own countries, they will have to work hard to adapt to the transition of becoming American nurses.

"In America, nurses have

more autonomy. They're expected, legally, to question orders that they feel are inappropriate—to have responsibility for a physical assessment," Anderson said.

"In other countries they, more or less, will just follow the doctor's order. If the order is incorrect, the responsibility is the physician's. [In the United States] if the nurse does not

recognize [a questionable order], it is the nurse's responsibility as well as the doctor's."

Though WIN was designed to aid in the nursing shortage and the necessity for bilingual nurses, Anderson still has concerns about the growing problem.

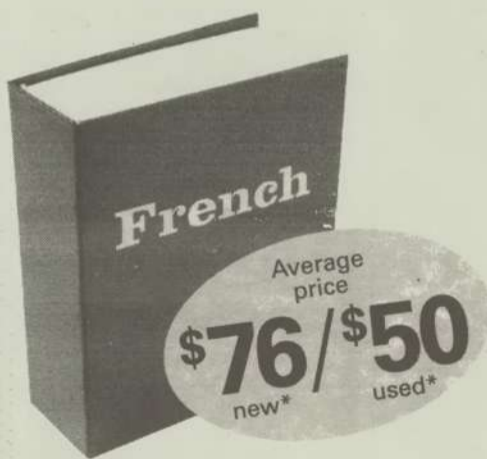
"What we're dealing with now is the average age of nursing is quite high, so

most of the nurses are going to be facing retirement in the next 10 or 15 years," she said.

According to Anderson, the recruiting process needs to begin in high schools.

"We want to have enough qualified nurses. It's going to get very acute ... as the baby boomers start needing hospitalization," said Anderson.

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