



Jan 12 2021 Page A006 Clip resized 44%

A gift that will keep giving to Oklahoma's health care system

Oklahoma CareerTech

As the coronavirus threatens to overwhelm Oklahoma's already strapped health care system, one state agency received a gift that will help it train even more nursing students during this critical time.

Oklahoma CareerTech received 49 hospital beds from the Emergency Medical Services Authority. With an estimated value of \$2,500 to \$5,000 per bed, EMSA's gift was a game changer for health careers education. EMSA and CareerTech have partnered for years on various training programs, and this year, that partnership paid off in a big way.

Regional Medical Response System Director Heather Yazdanipour said EMSA purchased the beds years ago as part of the durable medical equipment it needed to set up alternative care sites. Those sites allowed EMSA to operate a temporary hospital in an arena or tent or just about anywhere.

When the Federal Emergency Management Agency later created pod systems that were easier to deploy, EMSA no longer needed the beds, and they were put in storage, where they remained until this year.

The beds were gathering dust in a warehouse when Yazdanipour decided to give them away. She immediately thought of Metro Technology Centers, one of Oklahoma's 29 technology center districts.

"I know how hard it is for educational institutions to get approval to purchase large pieces of equipment like this," Yazdanipour said.

She knew that from personal experience. Many years ago, after an industrial accident forced her to retool for a new career, Yazdanipour had



PROVIDED

Metro Tech health careers students check a patient's vitals.

enrolled at Metro Tech as a student. Before the accident, she'd been working on an art degree, but after her experience, she decided to become a paramedic.

After graduation, she went to work as an EMT. Because she had loved her learning experience at Metro Tech, when a teaching job opened up at the tech center, she returned to teach at her alma mater. She taught several years at the tech center and then returned to EMSA as an instructor to set up her own program.

"I was able to use the training I received at Metro Tech to create a great paramedic program at EMSA, so now we run our own in-house paramedic program," she said.

To find a home for the beds, she called Metro Tech nursing instructor Josie Scott with the offer of all 49. For several years, Yazdanipour and Scott worked together on an annual mass casualty event, during which Scott had originally seen the beds. As excited as she was at the prospect of getting new beds for her program, she said she did not need 49. Scott reached out to Lara Morris at the

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

"I asked, 'Can other schools utilize these as well?'" Scott said.

Morris, health careers education program manager at ODCTE, immediately went to work. With help from other CareerTech staff members, the beds were delivered to 23 campuses in 16 different technology center districts.

"To be able to have brand new beds was awesome," Scott said.

Morris said more beds in the technology centers means more students can get hands-on training.

"A lot of short-term nursing programs might only have one bed at their disposal for all 10 or so students," she said. "Now they can get hands-on experience, rather than watching another student and having to wait their turn."

The beds are nothing fancy, according to Morris, but the simple crank beds are similar to the beds still being used in many rural areas.

CareerTech has 26 training programs across the state to train licensed practical nurses that pro-

vide a foundation for two- or four-year registered nurse programs.

In addition, Morris said, CareerTech is working on a staffing surge for the pandemic. This includes training people to do other things in a hospital to help nurses, such as donning and doffing protective gear and handling basic hygiene and cleanliness tasks. CareerTech also offers a nurse refresher course at 10 campuses, in partnership with the University of Oklahoma's College of Nursing.

Job openings in nursing are projected to grow at a faster rate than all other occupations through 2026.

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