Ridley-Lowell Provides Education in Allied Health Professions

by Meg Barone

While the roller coaster ride of the U.S. economy continues its upward climb and then narrowing dips and hairpin turns, one particular industry seems to be steam- ing ahead on a relatively even course. Numerous experts have pointed out over the last three years that jobs in healthcare and wellness are generally recession-proof, and an aging Baby Boomer population will continue to create a demand.

One Connecticut school has taken note of the industry’s growing needs and interest in improved quality of life and has tailored the courses at its campus to medical assisting and massage therapy. It was just last April that Ridley- Lowell Business & Technical Institute designated its Danbury campus as a site for training in medical and wellness careers, from the first of students to graduate in these fields.

In that brief period of time, Laurel Weymouth has surgery to pre-orthopedic therapy, which she plans to fruition. Weymouth envisioned an institute focused on training students in medical assisting and massage therapy but also of transforming the campus into a center that would help educate the public in health-related issues, as Weymouth says. Weymouth is the first of students to graduate in these fields.

“We not only wanted to build a campus with a wide range of professions and trades,” Weymouth says. Laurel Weymouth’s concept includes hosting lectures, creating networking opportunities for professionals already working within the field, and creating hands-on learning experiences for her existing students. She has already accomplished those goals.

“We have a student-run clinic, which welcomes the community in for massages at a discounted rate so that the students have an opportunity to work on different types of clients,” Weymouth says. “We also have a volunteer program where students work on patients under the supervision of licensed massage therapists and instructors. Day and evening hours are available to students who never sat for their exam and now want help with improving interviewing skills. We offer, where they learn resume-building skills, interviewing preparation, professionalism, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. There is a $45 fee per person.

Weymouth’s vision has brought to the school another program, which was specifically designed to target those students who participated in other school massage therapy programs but now feel the need for tutoring to get up to speed, and people who never sat for their exam and now want help with exam preparation. Ridley- Lowell has put together an exam prep course to address those needs.

“We’re still new and growing, and we’re reaching out to the community,” Weymouth said. And it’s a two-way street, she said. Weymouth and her staff sit regional meetings with therapists and speak from the medical and wellness field to contact them about coming to the institute to talk with students about their profession or to serve as guest lecturers at events and workshops hosted by Ridley-Lowell.

She is also lining up spas, medical clinics and other facilities that would be willing to allow Ridley- Lowell students to practice their skills. Weymouth said. “We’re looking to build our programs and create relationships with other professionals to benefit everyone,” Weymouth said.

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Ridley-Lowell is currently enrolling students for its spring day and evening classes in medical assisting and massage therapy. Day classes launch on April 4 and evening classes are offered on May 11. The school is recruiting students who must be at least 17 years old and have a high school diploma or GED. Financial assistance is available for qualified students. To find out more about Ridley-Lowell, please contact your local admissions counselor or visit the website at www.ridley.edu.

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