



College and Community Relations

News Release
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Pinning ceremony set for 1st graduates of evening/weekend nursing program

*Partnership between Grossmont College and Grossmont Healthcare
District addresses region's critical nursing shortage*

El Cajon – Twice in five years Lisa Sayre had finally made it to the top of the waiting list for admission into Grossmont College's nursing program, but twice, she reluctantly let the opportunity slip by because of family obligations. The first time, it was the birth of her now-5-year-old that forced her to put her nursing aspirations on the back burner. The second time, it was for a similar reason: she had had a second child and was working outside of the home to help support her growing family.

A licensed psychology technician, Sayre's interest in nursing was piqued while undergoing the medical/surgical portion of her training, but until 18 months ago, she had resigned herself to waiting until her children were older before pursuing a nursing career.

"When Grossmont College opened the weekend/evening program, it was a perfect opportunity for me, and others like me, to get on the accelerated track to getting my degree as a registered nurse."

Sayre and 19 pioneering colleagues will receive the Grossmont College Nursing pins, a tradition that goes back more than 140 years to the Nightingale School of Nursing, at a ceremony **3 p.m. Friday, July 11**, at the **El Cajon Community Center, 195 E. Douglas Ave.**

The opportunity to become RNs in 18 months instead of the traditional two years and to earn their degrees by attending classes at nights and on weekends was made

possible by a \$78,000 startup grant to Grossmont College by the Grossmont Healthcare District.

And not only has the program been a godsend to people like Sayre whose busy lives make it nearly impossible to attend daytime classes, but it has also proved one way to address the region's chronic registered nursing shortage.

"We are delighted to have the Grossmont Healthcare District as a partner in this important endeavor," said Grossmont College President Dr. Ted Martinez, Jr. "Our nursing students benefit because it means those with work or family obligations during the traditional work hours can now fit in classes at night and on weekends."

Sayre is a perfect example.

"The weekend/evening configuration helped my family with daycare issues. My husband watched the children at night while I attended classes," said Sayre, who plans to pursue neonatology, which she describes as "the intensive care unit for newborns."

When the grant for the program was approved by the Grossmont Healthcare District, Gloria Chadwick, president of the healthcare district board, said the decision was an easy one to make.

"The program not only is in keeping with the healthcare district's mission of funding worthy healthcare-related organizations and activities, it also makes a lot of sense to support a valuable resource to the hospital itself – a well-trained and much-needed corps of nurses," she said.

Chadwick, a graduate of Grossmont's nursing program, will speak at the ceremony and assist with the pinning.

Dr. Elisabeth Hamel, the college's associate dean of health professions, said that the program is identical to what is offered in the regular two-year nursing program, except that students attended classes and received their clinical education in an intense year-round mode instead of following the traditional semester schedules.

"This new program helps us get students educated and job-ready as fast as possible," Hamel said.

Sayre's classmates include others currently employed in the health field, such as Bella Gulkarova, a respiratory therapist, and Richard Hemphill, a paramedic.

“This is an especially talented and committed group,” she said. “Several will work in an ICU setting. This has been a great opportunity and we appreciate the alternative classroom and clinical hours made possible by Grossmont College and the Grossmont Healthcare District.”

The weekend/evening nursing program was one of eight college programs chosen statewide for a Student Success Award in spring 2002 by the Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges. The award honors community college programs that demonstrate an ability to “effectively respond to student needs.”

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