

## Medical Explorer Program in Waupun Area School District



High school, an opportunity of exploration and self-discovery. A chance to focus on time management as one learns to juggle school, athletics, extracurricular activities, work, and of course, a social life. A period to focus on becoming academically prepared for a future career. Eight Waupun Area Junior Senior High School (WAJSHS) students are doing just this as they are the inaugural group of Medical Explorers, a Health Sciences Career Exploration cooperative effort between WAJSHS and Waupun Memorial Hospital - Agnesian Healthcare. Since Waupun is on an alternate day block schedule the students spend two days a week at the hospital from 7:40-9:15am and every other Friday the students meet with Health Science mentor Dave Burchardt at school. Senior Kyle Miller shares, “Medical Explorer really allows us as students to experience every aspect of the hospital, from surgery to food service. It allows us to get a complete perspective of working in a hospital.” Hospital rotations consist of Surgery, Intensive Care Unit, Emergency Department, Respiratory Therapy, Physical Therapy, Medical Imaging, Clinic, Lab, Registration, and Food Service. Rotations are either two or four days in length. So far students have completed two rotations and the enthusiasm comes out as students share their experiences with Burchardt and one another. “Medical Explorer has been a great experience so far. I can’t wait to see what other experiences I will get through this program,” states Junior Jensen Navis. Students devote their Friday class time at the High School to focus on the written and presentation requirements of the course: journaling, researching and writing a paper focusing on careers, designing and ultimately presenting a summary presentation for hospital and school staff. Senior Delicia Schindel mentions, “This is a really eye-opening experience that is going to help me decide my future career.”

Waupun transitioned to an Academy Model a few years ago. At that time, administration challenged each Academy Lead Team member to seek out opportunities for students in their pathway. “We already had students enrolling in the Certified Nursing Assistant program through Youth Options, but I was looking for other relevant, real-life experiences our Health Science students could engage in,” says Burchardt. Fortunately Lecia Huenink, parent of WAJSH students and an Agnesian Healthcare employee, approached Burchardt about bringing an experience like Medical Explorer to the district. Huenink has experience from the hospital staff side as she leads medical laboratory rotations at Ripon Medical Center for the Ripon High School Medical Explorer program. “When Lecia reached out to me and we met to discuss how the program functions in Ripon, I immediately saw Medical Explorer providing a relevant niche for our Health Sciences Pathway students,”

Burchardt states. Since the winter of 2015 Huenink and Burchardt have periodically met to design what Medical Explorer would look like in Waupun along with meeting and gaining approval from both Agnesian and School District administration. Burchardt credits Waupun Memorial Hospital chief operating officer DeAnn Thurmer along with District Administrator Dr. Tonya Gubin and the Waupun Area School District School Board for embracing and supporting this opportunity.

An application process involving letters of recommendation, an essay indicating how the student perceives this opportunity as relevant to their career path along with documentation of Health Sciences Pathway courses completed, such as Human Anatomy & Physiology, Medical Terminology, or Human Body Systems (the Project Lead The Way Biomedical Science Year 2 class) provided the selection committee with valuable information for selecting the Medical Explorer group. Senior Samantha Schlieve really sums up the program, “It has been a great hands-on learning experience that we wouldn’t get by learning in the classroom.”

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