Education Fair held at Cape Coral Hospital

14 schools represented at program hosted by Lee Memorial Health System

June 24, 2011
By MEGHAN MCCOY, mmccoy@breeze.newspapers.com

The last of the four Education Fairs that were held at each of the Lee Memorial Health System campuses was hosted Friday at Cape Coral Hospital with 14 schools in attendance sharing information about their health care related programs.

Lee Memorial Health System Human Resources Administration Business Partner Michael Polito said about nine of the schools that were in attendance have local campuses.

Although the four fairs attracted about 200 employees and community members, he said it was not about quantity, but rather about the quality provided for them.

Polito said the Education Fair was geared towards people who are actually interested in education and truly have an interest in what programs the schools are offering.

The fair, he said, gives those who attended an idea of what kind of choices are out there for people to further their education.

Right now Lee Memorial Health System has 400 job openings, which all require a level of expertise. Polito said the openings are clinical jobs that require further education and advanced degrees.

The growth in clinical jobs is needed, he said, because of individuals retiring and the baby boomers needing more health care.

In addition to the multiple schools handing out information about their programs, Lee Memorial Health System also handed out information that highlighted careers, information about grants and scholarships and career assessments.

Lee Memorial Health System offers tuition reimbursement and advancement assistance to full-time and part-time employees after 12 months of employment. It also provides educational grants to employees and volunteers, as well as their families and the community at large.

Some of the same schools that participate in the fair every year bring information with them about new degree programs they may have introduced at their facility.

This year a new university to the area participated in the Education Fair for the first time and was pleased with the feedback it received.

Keiser University, which began in 1977 in Fort Lauderdale, opened a new location in Fort Myers in May 2010 on Colonial Boulevard in Fort Myers.

Keiser University President Nancy Tedros said the fair is a great opportunity for the school, as well as the Lee Memorial Health System employees, because of the convenience factor. She said since so many of the employees from Lee Memorial are looking for opportunities to advance their education, having health care related program information at the fairs made it easier for them to see what they offer.

Polito said when Keiser University first came to the community, official asked what programs were needed in the area, which lead the school to offering the Associate of Science in Diagnostic Medical Sonography program.

"When Keiser looks at new programs, we go through a process to see
what is available in the community and what is needed,” Tedros said, which led to a conversation with Polito about the need of a sonography program.

She said as far as she knows Keiser is the only accredited university offering the program from Tampa to Fort Lauderdale.

“It is needed in the area,” Tedros said about the program.

Tedros said the school began enrolling students into the program in May and in-the-field sonography will start in August.

Cape Coral resident Rayanne Thompson attended the fair Friday to seek out what options she has in transferring credits she already earned from a two-year degree she completed.

The Cape Coral Hospital lab assistant said she had been looking forward to the fair all week long because she was interested in talking with a representative from Southwest Florida College and Edison State College.

She said although she loves her job as a lab assistant, she wants to enhance herself and continue learning. Thompson said she is interested in pursuing a nursing degree.

Thompson has worked at Cape Coral Hospital for five years.

The Lee Memorial Health System began holding the annual education fairs eight years ago at each campus and opened them up to the community about three years ago.