

In The News

Center for Health Education receives business award

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Community College Center for Health Education is the recipient of the 2019 Brian R. Johnson Outstanding Business Award in recognition of its commitment to a “school-to-career” internship program at Southwick Regional High School.

The award is presented each year by the Business Education Alliance of Southwick, created in the 1990s by local business leaders to establish partnerships between schools and area employers. Johnson was a co-founder of the BEA. Its motto is “Building Bridges Between School and Career.”

“Brian was one of the visionaries who had this idea to create a workplace-ready force of kids,” said Maryanne Margiotta, career facilitator at Southwick Regional High School and coordinator of its Diversified Learning Experience program. “We have internships at dozens of different places, from daycare centers to Westfield District Court, Baystate Medical Center, Noble Hospital, our local schools, the Westfield Fire Department, the Southwick Dept. of Public Works, personal trainers. Each year we give the award to one employer that we really feel exemplifies his vision.”

This year it is HCC.

About 30 high school seniors participate in the DLE program every year. During the last three semesters, HCC has hosted six to intern as patient simulation technicians in the Center for Health Education.



Turley Publications Photo courtesy of Chris Yurka

HCC patient simulation technician Sue Jones, left, and HCC simulation lab coordinator Michelle Sherlin, holding the award plaque from the Business Education Alliance of Southwick, stand in one of the simulation rooms in the Holyoke Community College Center for Health Education.

The award was presented to representatives from the Center for Health Education during a celebration dinner Wednesday, April 10, at Southwick Regional High School.

“It’s quite an honor,” said Michelle Sherlin, HCC simulation lab coordinator. “We’re very proud of our association with Southwick and happy to be able to offer such meaningful work experiences to students considering future careers in healthcare.”

At HCC, the high school seniors

worked inside the center’s simulation suites and control rooms. The simulation areas allow nursing and other HCC students studying health careers to practice their training in a simulated medical environment with computerized medical mannequins – sims – that can be programmed with ailments and diseases suffered by real patients.

The students worked 12 hours over three to five days each week for a whole semester, unpaid.

“They learned how to put wounds

on the sims,” Sherlin said. “They learned to write the scripts for different simulation exercises. They learned to program the medication dispensing system. They learned debriefing techniques, medical terminology and documentation. They learned to program and operate the audio-visual system. They learned about everything a patient simulation technician would need to know.”

The students who interned at HCC had expressed an interest in healthcare.

“We like to match an internship to what the student is exploring as a career field,” said Margiotta. “In many cases, an internship really cements their decision to pursue that as a career, but we’ve also had students who decide it’s not for them.”

For 17-year-old intern Brittany Penland, it was the former.

“I want to be a nurse,” she said. “The internship was a great experience, even better than I expected.”

Penland is heading to Fitchburg State University in September to study nursing. She said that, beyond the work in the simulation center, Sherlin and patient simulation technician Sue Jones gave her a lot of helpful advice about her nursing education, such as what courses to take.

Margiotta said Penland’s experience was typical of others who intern at HCC.

“The students have really enjoyed all their time there and generally don’t want to leave when their internship is finished,” she said. “They just learn so much and are better prepared for a career.”