

Training English Nurses in Ste. Agathe

May 2008

The Ste. Agathe hospital has again benefited from an innovative project to bring more English-speaking health professionals into its establishment. Three third-year nursing students from Vanier College in Montreal spent the month of April in Ste. Agathe, working alongside staff nurses in the emergency department and the operating room and postoperative recovery room.

The McGill Training and Human Resources Development Project is run in partnership with the Vanier College Nursing Department and it aims to “ensure that English-speaking clients receive effective communication in their language from the health and social services professionals serving their needs, and to increase the number of English-speaking professionals working in the health and social services system.”

In April of 2007, the hospital received the first group of three students in the programme and the experience led to developing an on-going relationship between the CSSS des Sommets and Vanier College. Active recruitment is underway to encourage Vanier students to come to Ste. Agathe for summer externships.

To ease the transition out of the city, the CSSS provided accommodations in a waterfront condo rented for that purpose. The students expressed their pleasure at being housed in a quality building in the centre of town only a ten-minute walk from the hospital. They spent four days a week in Ste. Agathe under the supervision of a preceptor with the close involvement of the school.

When I asked the students for their impressions of their experience, they told me that they were warmly welcomed and shown the ropes by the staff of the hospital. They were slowly given more responsibility over the course of their month on the job. They felt that, because they were under the supervision of a preceptor rather than closely tied to their teachers, they were able to develop their independence more rapidly and felt pride in their ability to grow into the jobs assigned to them.

But the biggest advantage that they expressed was that they were given the opportunity to learn to provide services in French! Previous work experience stages had been in some of the large Montreal hospitals where they were able to work in English, complementing their education in the English-language environment of Vanier College.

The management of the CSSS des Sommets is pleased to provide this opportunity to the Vanier students. In the past, only French-language institutions had access to this kind of training here, but with the broadening of the base to include Vanier, the health and social services network of the Laurentians will benefit from the input of the students so that a greater understanding of the needs of English-speaking professionals can be achieved and the possibilities of recruiting full-time staff can be increased.

There is clear recognition in the administration of the CSSS des Sommets that the English-language communities have distinct needs over and above the provision of quality care. This includes the provision of services in the language of the patient or client. If you are interested in helping us to promote English services in the health and social services network, please join us on the English Communities Committee and share your thoughts and perspectives in our constructive dialogue aimed at improving those services. Contact me for more information.

Sheila Eskenazi, President, English Communities Committee of the CSSS des Sommets