

New On-the-Job Training Program at St. Luke's Prepares Low-Income Candidates

By Sam Kennedy

LEHIGH VALLEY - Lexi Krim's career path has become clearer and more exciting since she was hired by St. Luke's as a phlebotomist.

She was one of a handful of low-income, highly motivated workers, with a high-school diplomas, or GED, who recently completed the new On-the-Job Training (OJT) program. Jointly run by St. Luke's and PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley, OJT places deserving candidates in paid, entry-level, hard-to-fill, high-turnover positions while giving them a chance for a growth-oriented job in the health network.

Since September, the 21-year-old single Mom, from Catasauqua, had been learning to draw blood at St. Luke's Bethlehem. She is enthused about "learning new skills I didn't have experience in," enjoying classes that taught her about human anatomy and physiology, along with the proper way to insert a needle safely into someone's vein to withdraw their blood.

"I love to learn," Krim says, who studied health occupations at Lehigh Career and Technical Institute and previously provided personal care to residents at Gracedale Nursing Home. She hopes to start nursing school at St. Luke's next year.

OJT was conceived by Carol Kuplen, president of St. Luke's Bethlehem Campus and Network Chief Nursing Officer, and Victoria Montero, Network Manager, Health Equity Initiatives in Community Health. They envisioned it as a win-win for the network and the newcomers. And it's working.

Across the Valley at St. Luke's Allentown Campus, Laury Gonzalez, also 21 and also a single Mom, is a new employee in the hospital's Sterile Processing Department. She had spent the fall learning the six steps to decontaminate, clean and sterilize instruments for surgery and other invasive procedures. Phlebotomy and Sterile Processing OJT trainees are also placed at St. Luke's Sacred Heart and Anderson campuses.

Just a few months ago, Gonzalez, of Allentown, was unloading tractor-trailers at Lowe's Hardware, and hoping for a new work opportunity, which she found through the OJT program. A truck driver who delivers to St. Luke's, along with Lowe's, mentioned the nascent initiative, and she applied and was hired as a trainee. Gonzalez also wants to pursue a nursing degree at St. Luke's.

"These young women have such motivation to learn and succeed," says Jackie Finelli, the OJT coordinator and the network's coordinator of Adolescent Career Mentor-Initiatives. Along with the phlebotomy and sterile processing directors, staff from human resources and other departments, she helped screen, interview and select the three phlebotomy and three sterile processing interns.

"We wanted to be sure they fit with the St. Luke's culture, have passion and the aptitude that will help them and their department thrive together in the long run," she says.





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EPA Qualified Outdoor Wood Furnaces

A new generation of clean

When John Hanley built his 4,000 square foot log cabin in a small Ohio township 17 years ago, he chose propane for heat and domestic hot water because it was an economical choice. But, when propane prices increased and his annual fuel bill reached \$6000, he dropped the thermostat to 63°F to manage his costs. His wife, however, suffered with severe arthritis and lowering the ambient temperature caused her discomfort. He began looking for a more affordable home heating solution. His research led him to outdoor wood furnaces.

Today's outdoor wood furnaces, also called wood boilers or wood-fired hydronic heaters are a clean, cost-effective alternative to the safety, mess and health concerns of indoor wood burning, while also providing a ready supply of domestic hot water.

The outdoor furnace heats water in an insulated water jacket surrounding the firebox. The heated water circulates through underground pipes to a forced-air furnace, boiler or radiant floor heating system that distributes even, adjustable and comfortable heat.

Hanley knew some townships placed restrictions on the installation of outdoor wood furnaces to address smoke emission issues. It was important for him to set a good example in his own community

by choosing a unit that was EPA qualified. Central Boiler, an American-owned company in business since 1984, helped create the EPA Hydronic Heater Program. Their E-Classic was the first outdoor wood furnace meeting Phase 2 of the program. Central Boiler's new E-Classic models utilize a three-stage gasification technology and a self-regulating thermostatically controlled system that burns wood so completely that combustion efficiencies approach 100%. This means the owner burns less wood, with very little residual ash and virtually no smoke. By minimizing the emissions, this cleaner generation of outdoor furnaces is the optimum choice for people concerned with the environment.

Hanley chose an E-Classic to heat a 2,500 square foot barn/garage in addition to his home and hot water. Now, Hanley's wife keeps the ambient house temperature at 76°F. "She's happy and she has endless hot water for her whirlpool bath," he says.

Company reliability was also a factor in his choice. "Central Boiler stands behind their products and this sort of warranty service is really important to me."

Finally, because he cuts his own wood, he has eliminated his home heating costs enabling him to redirect the money saved to their children's university educations.

"This furnace is the way to go. You can't beat it," says Hanley.



In 2002, concerns regarding smoke emissions from outdoor wood furnaces prompted a number of manufacturers to form the Outdoor Furnace Manufacturers Caucus and ultimately partner voluntarily with the EPA to create a program that gave homeowners choices for cleaner, more efficient models. EPA states that outdoor hydronic heaters that are EPA Phase 2 program qualified are 90% cleaner than unqualified units.



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