

Stimulus funds help nursing hopefuls learn at Lyman Hall

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10/13/2009

WALLINGFORD - The first waves of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act federal stimulus money arrived earlier in the year and in Wallingford, the money has already begun to create new opportunities for a select group of 10 adults from all over the South Central region of the state.

A handful of students began to file into Lyman Hall High School's F-wing Tuesday evening for the first day of an intensive seven-month course where they will brush up on basic reading and writing skills, learn new technological and office skills and leave in April ready to obtain certification to become a Certified Nursing Assistant.

But the course - designed exclusively by Wallingford Adult Education - is much more than a medical assisting course. For the students, some of whom have been displaced by the economic climate, it's a step into a new field and a stepping stone to future career advancement.

"I really, really want to do this," said resident Jossie Rosado, who was selected to participate in FAME, an acronym for the class titled: Formation of Adult Medical Entrepreneurs. "This is my opportunity and I don't want to miss an opportunity."

While Rosado works part time as a home care specialist and formerly taught salsa dance classes at Sheehan High School, she is ready for a change and is looking forward to becoming a CNA and possibly gaining employment with Masonicare or Gaylord Hospital, she said.

For single parent Amanda Kendrick of Cheshire, an online student of the University of Phoenix, the course will allow her to get one step closer to her goal of becoming a registered nurse. Students were screened and referred by the state Department of Labor.



Jossie Rosado holds the hand of her friend, Ferris Sorares, during a break on their first day of Formation of Adult Medical Entrepreneurs class at Lyman Hall High School in Wallingford Tuesday. Johnathon Henninger / Record-Journal

The program is free to participants and costs \$56,190 to run, which includes child care and transportation stipends, and course materials such as textbooks and computer software. It is part of the \$4.8 million in federal stimulus money received by the Workforce Alliance of New Haven, which has been selected by the state to administer job training programs in New Haven and Middlesex counties.

While the economy is sluggish, it's the perfect time to gain additional training and skills - especially in the medical field, said Bill Villano, executive director of the alliance. "A lot of the programs that were designed are in the health care field," where there are job openings, he said.

This week Gov. M. Jodi Rell said the state has applied for nearly \$5 million in additional stimulus money to place students in nursing and medical training programs in response to a statewide shortage in the field.

"I think it's dynamite," said Jean Mantzaris, director of adult education, who helped design the course-work. "We wanted these people to go away with good math, writing, office and job training skills, so that they would be highly employable."

The course is also a new opportunity for 22-year-old Catherine Shortell, a recent high honors graduate of Southern Connecticut State University and former student teacher at Sheehan High School . She may be younger than some of her students, but the new lead teacher who also helped design the new curriculum is ready to teach computer, office, job hunting skills as well as math, reading and writing. Additional instructors will provide technical, lab and financial skills instruction.

"You know, this is stimulus money, so we're really excited about it," said Pamela Anderson, technology coordinator for adult education, who will be teaching skills using Microsoft Office 2007. "We designed the curriculum from scratch and we've got a lot of different staff involved.

"We wanted to keep it small," Anderson said, "so that it's a quality program."