Spotlight on Student Success

Transfer & Placement Director Suzi Mathias sat down with Nursing student Bee Moua to talk about his decision to become a nurse and his plans for the future. Here’s their conversation.

Suzi: Tell me a little bit about your background, Bee.
Bee: I was born in a refugee camp in Thailand, and I moved to the Wausau area when I was about five years old. I am one of nine children. I attended DC Everest High School. My parents were extremely supportive about my choice to go back to college and earn a degree in nursing.

Suzi: Why did you decide on nursing?
Bee: After graduating from high school, I went to NTC for Computer Information Systems, but left to complete a degree in Political Science at UWSP. When I finished, I was exhausted from school and still had no plans for the future, so I decided to take some time off and went to South Korea to teach English. After teaching English for two years, I took another year to backpack through Australia which gave me quite a bit of time to think about my future. After soul searching, I knew that nursing was the right profession for me. I wanted a job where I could help people, and the pay and hours also appealed to me. Since I love to travel, perhaps a traveling nurse position may be in my future.

Suzi: Other than being a NTO student, how do you feel being a diverse student at NTC? What kind of support do you receive from staff members, Student Services, etc.?
Bee: There has never been a time when the instructors, Student Services staff, and others have not gone out of their way to help, support, and guide me.

Suzi: What tips do you have for males or females going into the Nursing program? What have you learned that would be valuable for students to know?
Bee: Nursing is a tough program that can be stressful at times, and it requires a lot of time and dedication. Many students have outside responsibilities, such as work and a family, which take away from their studying time. I think that any students thinking about applying for the Nursing program have to want it badly enough that they are willing to make the time in their busy schedules.

Suzi: Where do you see yourself in a few years down the road and in the far-off future?
Bee: I see myself working as a nurse in a hospital setting; hopefully, with a small house somewhere out in the country with children running about. Just let me finish this program and get a job!
**NTC graduate Sandra Weber returned to school at the age of 32. She had lost her factory job, and realized she had an opportunity to do something more with her life. Here is a snapshot of her journey from unemployed factory worker to full-time nurse.**

Hi, I’m Sandra K. Weber, R.N. I was 32 years of age when I started my journey at NTC. I graduated from NTC’s Nursing Associate Degree program in May 2013. If anyone would have said to me four years ago that I would be working as a Registered Nurse, caring for the ill and the injured, I would not have believed it. It just seemed to be too far out of reach to be an attainable goal.

To begin, I would like to tell you a little bit about what brought me to NTC. I graduated from high school in 1995, and I was so excited to be done with school that the thought of continuing my education was hard to handle. I didn’t really know what I wanted to do for the rest of my life and was not ready to commit to a profession. Instead of continuing my education, I worked in a few different types of jobs like food service and retail, but was never really able to settle into a job until I got married and had children. I then went to work in a local factory in Medford and remained there for 10 years, excelling in my position and eventually obtaining a position on day shift at the highest labor grade offered. I was paid well, had good benefits, and worked on day shift – everything people want in a job. So why wasn’t I happy? I just kept feeling like I should be doing more with my life.

In 2005, I was laid off at work during a company buyout and decided to act on the need to change my direction in life. I took a local Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course and started to work part-time as a CNA. I really enjoyed working as a caregiver and didn’t feel like I was going to “work.” I was making a difference! What a refreshing feeling, to feel like you are making a difference. A few months later, the company buyout was over and I ended up getting called back to work. I had to go back because of the pay and benefits that I needed to support my family, but I just could not give up working as a caregiver and continued that work on a casual basis.

In March 2009, I was still working at the factory but continued to have this nagging feeling that I should be doing more with my life. On March 8, I got a notice that said I was being laid off once again because the company was filing for bankruptcy. Needless to say, I was upset. How was I going to support my family with the faltering economy? I really needed a profession I could depend on and that I enjoyed doing. When I heard that the company had signed up for the TRA/TAA program to assist their employees in re-education and job training, helping with tuition, living costs, and insurance during re-education, I knew fate was intervening and giving me the opportunity to pursue my dreams. The day I found out I was going to be laid off from work indefinitely I drove up to NTC’s Medford campus and signed up for classes to start my journey to becoming a Registered Nurse, something I had been dreaming of since my first CNA class.

The receptionists at NTC were eager to help me. Getting started was the scariest and hardest thing to do, but they were always there to answer my questions, and if they couldn’t answer them they found someone that could. I worked closely with the Admission Specialist to meet certain requirements needed for the Nursing Program. The Learning Center staff helped me complete the tests needed for admission to NTC; as my journey continued they even proofread papers I had completed for assignments. I had no idea there was so much help available to aid in student success. Once I got into the core classes for Nursing, a whole new world opened up to me. The instructors were willing to aid in the success of their students and made themselves available to help students if they were struggling.

My favorite experiences occurred at clinical. I looked at the efficient nurses and dreamed that one day I would be just like them. I am so thankful for the Nursing staff at NTC that guided me during this life-changing journey and taught me what I needed to know to become an excellent nurse. NTC offers so much to aid in the success of their students. Assistance ranges from the Health Learning Resources Lab (HLRL) to personal and group tutoring session for Nursing students. I could see that the instructors’ main goal was for their students to succeed: How could I not excel with so much support?
Julie Reimer, Shane Arrowood, Patrick Kinney, and David Roloff

NTC has changed my view on continuing education. I never thought I would love learning, but this experience has shown me how enjoyable learning can be when you are passionate about it. I graduated in May 2013 as the Outstanding Graduate of the Nursing Program. I must say I could not have done it without all of the tools that were available to me. I took the NCLEX on June 27, and I was a Registered Nurse by July 1. I had attained my dream!

While studying to become a registered nurse, I worked part-time as a CNA at Clark County Health Care Center (CCHCC). While still in school, CCHCC scheduled my work hours around my class schedule, and some coworkers exchanged shifts with me, making it possible for me to attend class and/or clinical. It is wonderful to work for a facility that believes in the importance of further education and is willing to be flexible to aid in student success. It felt like they were as invested in my education as I was, wishing me luck on upcoming exams and helping clarify things in class that I did not understand. On July 1, 2013, I was offered a full-time day shift position as a Registered Nurse on their Rehabilitation Unit. I am very fortunate to have had so many resources and supporters available to me throughout this journey.

In September, NTO students from the Health programs gathered for a question and answer session with four representatives from Wausau area hospitals. HR Recruiter Julie Reimer and Supervisor of Nurses Shane Arrowood from Aspirus participated on the panel, along with Executive Director Patrick Kinney and David Roloff from Payment Financial Services of Marshfield Clinic. The following article features parts of that discussion.

Question: Explain the process of how to apply for a position at your business.
Aspirus: Apply on line, receive confirmation by e-mail, and complete the survey tool. You can add information at any time and send the application on to other open positions with an updated cover letter. Always pay attention to detail. One can check on line and by phone to see if the application was reviewed. Interviews are held by phone and in person, and people are encouraged to keep applying. We like to hire from within.

Marshfield Clinic: Much the same process as Aspirus. Again, keep applying.

Question: What are some characteristics of outstanding employees, ones that might lead to promotion?
Aspirus: We look for how an employee relates to patients, one that receives “outstanding” in all performance reviews, volunteers, has good soft skills. When hiring, we look at the cover letter to see if the applicant has researched the company and demonstrates that in the first paragraph.

Marshfield Clinic: We look for people who go the extra mile: does what’s best for the patient, uses best judgment, promotes trust, and displays a positive attitude. The cover letter should have no spelling errors, and grammar should be correct.

Question: How common is it to start in one position at your business and then ladder into another?
Aspirus & Marshfield Clinic: We encourage movement; just get started, ask questions, and learn as much as you can.
Question: Does laddering result in additional pay?
Aspirus & Marshfield Clinic: A lateral move does not result in a pay increase. An example of an increase would be a nurse moving up to charge nurse or supervisor.

Question: What are the current regional trends in health care occupations?
Aspirus: The Magnet Certification – only 2 percent of hospitals have this. To keep this certification, 80 percent of nursing staff should have a BSN by 2020.

Marshfield Clinic: Technology is the word – we are even connecting to outside institutions. Hospitals will be measured on patient satisfaction, so staff will need intelligence plus people skills. Current standard operating principles (SOPs) state that we must be lean, efficient, and competitive. Workers must be able to multi-task.

Question: How is continuing education offered at your institution, and is there an educational reimbursement program?
Both Aspirus Hospital and Marshfield Clinic offer in-house continuing education. Reimbursements are offered at Aspirus based on the following criteria: working .6 percent of time or greater, after six months of employment, complete with grade of B or better, and provide a one-year commitment after any class. Marshfield Clinic differs in that the reimbursement depends on the class, which may need to relate to a specific goal.

Question: What would employees say is the best thing about your organization?
Aspirus: The relationships we build with our employees and contacts that are made, along with educational opportunities.

Marshfield Clinic: People and relationships. We are employee-focused, have great benefits, and give outstanding patient care.

**Calendar of Events**
- October 30: IT Presentation-Resumes/CLs, 11-1, A211
- November 6: Job Fair for NTC Students/Alumni, 10-2, E101
- November 12: Business Prgs Transfer Fair, 11:30-2, E101
- November 20: IT Employer Panel, 11-1, A211

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