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Story and photo by Brandon Steinert

Barton medical support programs prove effective; new accreditations open doors

The primary goals driving most educational pursuits are to discover to a rewarding vocation and earn a respectable living wage.

A traditional bachelor's degree requires four-years, or more, of commitment. Barton Community College has a smorgasbord of offerings in the medical field that will help students reach those goals in two years or less.

Among those offerings, Medical Assistant is one that has grown in popularity in recent years. The 68-credit-hour Associate in Applied Science program gives students the training they need to land a job at nearly any hospital or small physician's practice. Job responsibilities range from assisting physicians by measuring and recording vital signs to sterilizing instruments and assisting with minor office surgeries or day-to-day procedures. Students are also trained to handle hospital office work.

Barton now offers certification through the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA).

Carli Newkirk graduated from the program in December of 2013 and was one of the first to take the certification exam through Barton. Upon completion, she immediately went to work as a nationally certified clinical medical assistant at Clara Barton Hospital in Hoisington.

"I got hired right out of graduation," she said. "I'm glad I went to Barton. I don't think I would have had the same opportunities if I went to a bigger school."

Now that school is out of the way and she's in the workforce, Newkirk is able to reflect on what drove her to become a medical assistant in the first place, and she can enjoy a job from which she derives purpose.

"I just want to help people," she said.

Medical Support Programs Coordinator Kim Brennan said she's proud of Newkirk's success and hopes more will follow in her footsteps, as there is a growing need for well-trained medical assistants.

"Physicians are more willing to put money toward hiring a certified medical assistant because they will have to work with them very closely," Brennan said. "Certification is something the industry is starting



to really value.”

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