



## LHS-27

## Combating the nursing shortage

Merced County, California (211,000), decided to address its current and projected nursing shortage by partnering with Merced Community College. As a result of this partnership, the college has doubled the number of students—the number has gone from 24 to 48—who enroll in its nursing program each year.

### Implementation notes

**Leadership/staffing** The program is administered by the Merced County department of workforce investment in collaboration with Merced Community College. Funding for the program was approved by the local workforce investment board, a federally mandated committee with representatives from private industry and public agencies, including schools. Local hospitals, the county health department, and the California Forensic Medical Group (which provides laboratory testing, among other services) are also partners in the program, providing facilities for training, sites for clinical work, and jobs for program graduates.

**Timeline** It took approximately one year to plan the program, bring in partners, and obtain workforce investment board approval and county board of supervisors support. The program's first students began their studies in August 2002.

**Budget/funding** Funding for the program is provided through the federal Workforce Investment Act. The county provides funding to the college for the additional staff and facilities needed to expand the nursing program. The county also provides students in its program with funds for child care, transportation, books, and licensing application fees.

**Program description** Many potential students approach the county for assistance, and others are referred by Merced Community College. The county gives priority to low-income students and veterans. The county conducts a complete assessment to ensure that candidates have the personality and academic traits needed to succeed in the program. Students must complete the prerequisite courses for nursing training prior to acceptance in the county pro-

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gram, and also meet the admission criteria for Merced Community College. Once the county students enter the program, they are treated exactly the same as all other students of the college and have access to such support services as advice concerning federal tuition grants and loans. Students spend two years in the program, which includes classroom work and clinical placements. Local employers develop relationships with students during their clinical rotations, and these relationships encourage many students to take jobs within the county.

**Results** In May 2003, 30 students graduated from Merced Community College's registered nursing program, including 13 participants in the county program. Of the 30 graduates, 21 accepted positions within the county. In January 2004, 18 county program participants began their first year in nursing school at Merced Community College. The program was just approved for continuation by the workforce investment board.

## LHS-28

### Holiday ornament sales help needy

Every year, the city of Lafayette, Colorado (23,000), produces a new, limited-edition holiday ornament featuring a local landmark. Proceeds of the sale of the ornaments go into the local Helping Hands fund that aids needy local families. The ornaments, which cost \$2.25 a piece to produce, are sold for \$5 each. The ornaments are sold at the fall lunch for all city employees as well as at all city facilities, offering employees a chance to give something back to their community. Many employees also ask vendors and consultants who work with the city to make a contribution to the Helping Hands fund in lieu of sending city staff a traditional holiday gift of fruit or candy. The ornaments are also sold in public libraries and recreation centers to residents. A committee of several staff members works with the city administrator to select appropriate projects to support, after receiving nominations from city staff members who work with needy children and families. The fund typically raises \$3,000 each year.

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