

DeKalb Medical is Off and Running with School at Work (SAW) Program

The first School at Work (SAW) class of DeKalb Medical graduated February 18, setting the stage for seven (7) DeKalb Medical associates to progress in their careers. The graduates are “trailblazers for [DeKalb Medical] according to LeRoy Walker, VP of Human Resources, and indeed a new SAW class is starting immediately. The program is sponsored and funded by Atlanta CareerRise’s Careers in Healthcare Atlanta Mobility Project (CHAMP).

One SAW graduate, Yavonne Platt, already moved to a new job in sonography, the field that SAW helped her identify for her career focus. Yavonne has enrolled in Gwinnett Technical College’s sonography program and has been promoted to patient care technician in DeKalb Medical’s Heart and Vascular unit. “SAW helped me gain confidence,” she says. “It was through SAW’s help that I rewrote my resume to help me get the new job.”

Other SAW graduates echo Yavonne’s praise for the program. “SAW led me to self-evaluate and challenge myself to do more,” says Terakesha (Terri) Broughton, an



Oncology patient care technician. Terri, who spoke at the graduation program, has worked at DeKalb Medical for 14 years and now is on track to pursue a future in nursing.

Natasha Swain also targeted nursing as her career. Currently a Medical Surgical patient care technician, Natasha is taking courses to enter nursing school at Georgia Piedmont Technical College. She credits SAW’s refresher work in medical terminology and math with helping her prepare for the challenging coursework ahead.

Radiology is in the future of Santino Cadogan, who received a SAW certificate of mastery. He will start taking prerequisites this summer for radiology studies at Georgia Perimeter College. SAW helped him prepare for the entrance exam and also has enabled him to deliver better patient care in his present job at Long Term Acute Care (LTAC) in Downtown Decatur.

The DeKalb Medical SAW program is managed by Shanika Bentley, who was hand-picked for the head coaching role and embraced it eagerly. “SAW gets people out of their comfort zone and equips them to grow personally as well as professionally,” she says.

Bringing SAW to DeKalb Medical was a collaborative effort of Cathy Hardin, executive director of Human Resources, and Anne Fears, director of Organization Development & Learning. Like

most hospitals, much of DeKalb Medical's continuing education is for medical professionals. Cathy and Anne view SAW as a breakthrough in giving non-professional staff a career opportunity path.

Atlanta CareerRise is a regional funder collaborative that pools and aligns resources from philanthropic, corporate, public and other sources to invest in sectoral workforce partnerships such as CHAMP. The purpose is to help entry level workers attain higher opportunities, improve workforce practices and assure that the metro Atlanta region has economic strength through a skilled workforce that meets the needs of present and future employers.