

# Nurses needed in Granite State

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by Doug Alden

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**N**ew Hampshire needs nurses.

The current demand in the field is high and only expected to increase both nationwide and in the Granite State, which has a large demographic of elderly and aging residents.

"I have more jobs than I have nurses for right now," said Phil Davis, a nursing recruiter for Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon. "We're growing so fast, and we're doing so many new programs and so many new initiatives, it's soaking it up. All the extra resources we have are just being tapped."

Davis was one of about two dozen health-care vendors at a job fair organized entirely for the nursing industry. Nurses and people interested in a nursing career went from table to table Friday at the Puritan Conference Center, meeting with health-care providers, schools and other agencies in need of qualified applicants.

The event was a cooperative effort between the founders of two nursing agencies created and run by nurses who know the industry from the inside and what both employers and applicants were seeking in the search for jobs.

"Vendors are just happy to have this platform to be able to find more staff," said Karen O'Donnell, owner and founder of New Boston-based Caring Nurses Staffing Agency LLC. "This is a unique experience because we haven't had anything big like this in New Hampshire, so we're really hoping that the contacts that are made today will produce a lot of good employment."

O'Donnell worked with HireNurses.com founder Rebecca Love, who runs her business out of Boston, to organize Friday's job fair. Love, who also teaches nursing at Bunker Hill Community College, said she and O'Donnell saw the need for the nurse-specific job fair as veterans of the

profession with a unique perspective on the current need and what is to come.

Rebecca Love, center, of HireNurses.com chats with job seekers at the Nursing Job Fair at the Puritan Conference Center in Manchester on Friday. (DAVID LANE/UNION LEADER)

Love said New Hampshire's nursing industry is in a difficult position geographically because of the concentration of hospitals and healthcare companies in the Boston area.

"The truth is it's hard for these smaller companies to compete on that level," said Love, who founded the web-based business two years ago.

Love said she and O'Donnell hoped for maybe 100 potential employees to attend Friday. The final tally of job seekers topped 145 and was successful enough that Love and O'Donnell were already talking about organizing another.

"Individual agencies have had their own job fairs at their own facilities but nothing that brings them all together," O'Donnell said. "I think that we got the word out there pretty well. People are coming in with their resumes in hand, and there's an awful lot of networking going on with the vendors."

Nurses welcomed the idea and opportunity to meet in person with the providers and other vendors in a relaxed setting that was quite different from filing an application online for a job they know only from a description in an ad with an unfamiliar employer.

Joyce Gosselin, a pediatric nurse from Goffstown, said it was a welcome change from the impersonal internet application process.

"It's more that they're trying to get your attention," Gosselin said. "When you're going online and trying to find a job, you're trying to get them to notice you. When you come in here, they notice you and get more of an idea of what they're about and if you're a fit for them or not."

Gosselin attended the fair with friend Mary Clancy of Merrimack, who works at a substance abuse clinic.

Clancy once worked as a medical transcriber, a job that was outsourced long ago, and started her nursing career in 2002 after raising her four children. She said nursing and health care in general have changed considerably in 13 years.

"To be honest, I haven't really seen a nursing job fair," Clancy said.

The idea isn't new, but vendors said they couldn't recall a nursing job fair recently in New Hampshire.

Ray Montambeault, a recruitment and retention coordinator for Genesis HealthCare for New Hampshire and Rhode Island, said the nursing need is also increasing because there is a large pool of current nurses nearing retirement.

Montambeault, who works out of his hometown of Franklin, said job fairs are often all-inclusive, with a wide variety of industries seeking applicants for a range of jobs.

For employers looking specifically for nurses, Friday provided a much more efficient and effective way to meet with applicants interested in general nursing jobs or particular fields.

"I go to job fairs throughout the state and you may see one or two nurses, and that's it. I have resumes from 15 nurses in two hours," Montambeault said. "I have people coming here that are truly interested in working as a nurse and in long-term care the energy level of the nurses coming through is good to see."

O'Donnell said one of the essential parts of nursing is interaction and time with patients, something she doesn't want to see shift because of tight finances in the health care.

"Unfortunately, hospitals are more business-driven than nonprofit driven, and I think the nurses feel that," O'Donnell said. "What I hope to accomplish is really to get back to basic bedside nursing and make sure our patients are cared for the way that they should be."

For more information:

<http://www.caringnurses.com/>

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