Growing Health Care Careers

ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

Career Exploration Tours give middle and high school students the opportunity to tour various departments at Eisenhower, introducing them to health care career options. Eisenhower Medical Center is best known for its medical services and for its excellence in patient care, but Eisenhower also supports a number of community programs. Two of these programs are garnering national attention for the impact they are having on one of the valley's most precious resources—children.

Eisenhower is an integral part of two community programs for students—Career Exploration Tours and Job Shadowing. Both programs are supported by the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership Development's (CVEP) Career Pathways Initiative led by Sheila Thornton, Healthcare Industry Council coordinator.

Career Exploration Tours give middle and high school students the opportunity to tour various departments at Eisenhower, introducing students to a myriad of health care career options.

Students first meet with a registered nurse and then visit a variety of departments, such as the Electrophysiology Laboratory, Nutritional Services, Rehabilitation Services, Laboratory Services, Radiology or Respiratory Services, offering students a broad view of the multitude of careers available at Eisenhower Medical Center. In each department, students learn about a career opportunity from an Eisenhower employee and see demonstrations of equipment associated with the department or position. A Human Resources representative closes the day, speaking about applications, job preparation and Eisenhower's Volunteer program.

Pam Silver, Nursing Education Project Coordinator, coordinates the tours at Eisenhower. *"These programs are vital to the future of health care in the Coachella Valley as well as being a way of getting children interested in higher education. Many of the students will develop an interest in the health care field as a result of these tours."* Silver continues, *"It is very exciting for the children to be in a hospital setting where they feel safe and can ask questions. The tour leaders in each department are equally engaged."*
"We get such positive feedback from our Directors. The program is an excellent opportunity for the students and for Eisenhower. And some day, these students may be here to take care of us."
—Kathy Lewis - Eisenhower Human Resources Specialist

Eisenhower also participates in a Job Shadowing Program in concert with local high schools that have established Health Academies as part of their curricula. Students enrolled in a Health Academy explore the field of health care with respect to career opportunities and the skills necessary to become an effective health care worker. Eisenhower's Job Shadow Program is orchestrated by Silver and Kathy Louis, Eisenhower Human Resources Specialist, who work directly with local high schools.

For example, the La Quinta Health Academy at La Quinta High School sends three students at a time to Eisenhower; each student shadows one person in a department, observing the employee's work over the course of four hours. The students are able to see, first hand, the role of a health care professional. This one-on-one experience also offers students the opportunity to ask questions, giving them a better understanding of what they observe and a sense of the practical aspects of the job.

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The Ford Motor Company's non-profit Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies (PAS) has taken notice of the CVEP programs. Ford PAS, which provides experiences to help students make decisions about their future education and careers, recently hosted its second annual Next Generation Learning Communities Institute and sixth annual Ford PAS National Networking Conference in Rancho Mirage in late June with Eisenhower professionals presenting at the conferences.

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