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Nurses embark on critical care training

KETCHUM, ID (September 5, 2008) — Two St. Luke's Wood River nurses recently returned from a six week, hands-on critical care training that will improve patient care at the hospital.

Marvin Miles and Cynthia Preston, both St. Luke's Wood River nurses, recently returned from training at St. Luke's Regional Medical Center in Boise. The training is part of a year-long program to become Intensive Care Unit nurses.

"We are fortunate that Marvin and Cynthia are eager to become certified in critical care. Their new expertise helps us to have a more cohesive and effective nursing team," said Cindy Mosier, manager of the nursing.

St. Luke's Wood River Foundation, which promotes the philanthropic support of the hospital, provided funding for these nurses to gain certification in critical care. In all, the Foundation provided funding for four St. Luke's Wood River nurses to complete the training, which includes education modules, hands-on ICU training rotation, practical experience and passing a certification exam.

The funding came with the help of the P. Scott McLean, Jr., MD Endowment Fund for Staff Education in the St. Luke's Wood River Foundation. The Boswell Family Foundation created the fund, named for Ketchum-based internist Dr. McLean, to assure that hospital staff has access to training and education.

"Endowment earnings provide long-term assurance that the hospital can increase the expertise of its staff to effectively use new and existing technologies," said Dr. McLean. "As important, the endowment assures that staff can always gain up to date knowledge about best practices in patient care."

The Foundation's investment in critical care is particularly important in light of the national nursing shortage. Although St. Luke's Wood River has successfully filled many nursing positions, it is particularly challenging to staff the Intensive Care Unit. Intensive Care nurses need advanced nursing certification, skills and experience.

St. Luke's Wood River requires six trained Intensive Care Unit nurses to cover all shifts. For many years the hospital has staffed ICU by hiring contract nurses through national nursing agencies. While the contract nurses are highly competent, these nurses cost significantly more than permanent nurses and there is a high turnover rate among these employees.

When the four St. Luke's Wood River nurses complete their critical care certification, St. Luke's Wood River will reduce reliance on contract ICU nurses. This will save the hospital nearly \$200,000 each year. And, for the first time in years, create a waiting list for nursing positions at the hospital.

The critical care nurse certification will also help St. Luke's in its journey to achieve Magnet Recognition, a national certification program that promotes nursing excellence.