

# Training Provides Boost Toward Medical Careers

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Students Tasha Gladney, left, and Queen Dobbs take part September 3 in a practice session to develop skills for careers as certified nursing assistants. Observing the process and checking with other students is Ruth Ness, the Graniteville-based training program's director. (Photo by Bill Bengston/ *Aiken Standard*)

GRANITEVILLE — Ruth Ness has labored in a wide variety of situations over the course of her 30 years in medicine, and she's now sharing her time and talent to help some of her neighbors move into the field, starting as certified nursing assistants.

A training program associated with Christ Central has Ness, an Air Force veteran and registered nurse, as its director, and six students are on board for a six-week program, having Sept. 19 – their graduation date – on the near horizon, close on the heels of Labor Day.

"There's two goals. The first goal is to get people to the point where they can get their state certification," Ness said. "A lot of people work in nursing homes – long-term care, that kind of thing – without being certified. They get trained by the nursing homes, and they pay them very minimally. Once they get certified by the state, and meet the standards that the state requires, they're able to request more money."

The second goal, she added, is to open a door for people who might not otherwise have been able to participate in such training. The class cost is \$600.

Ness' background includes 21 years as a medic in the Air Force, followed by education in nursing, which led to work in intensive-care units for 15 years. An advanced degree in nursing education followed, as did five years of teaching at Midlands Technical College, and that led to the chance to help develop the program in Graniteville.

Focal points in the local course include "all the basic cares," Ness said. "What they end up learning to do is using all the basic equipment that's needed and providing what we call intimate care for patients and for residents and for clients, and it's a lot of the things that the people are no longer able to do for themselves, like giving themselves a bath, or feeding, or transferring, or even just that human contact. Right now, that's an imperative, because even in long-term care, the patients are isolated from each other, so the only human contact that they do have are their CNAs and their nurses."

Aiken is an "exceptional" market in which to have such skills, Ness said, noting that one of her students – still en route to completing the training program – has a job offer from Aiken Regional Medical Centers, and past students have gotten offers straight out of school. Some local long-term and home-care businesses around the community are also in touch, asking when students will be graduating. "They're scrambling for our students, because they're very high caliber."

Windsor resident Alissa Eubanks, whose professional background includes work as an emergency medical technician, is among the current crop of students looking to step back into the working world. "I decided I wanted to go back into health care and found that nursing was what I wanted to do, and so I chose the program at the ground level – CNA," she said, noting that she plans to pursue work in the operating room at Aiken Regional Medical Centers, possibly as a patient care technician.

Ness is "an awesome teacher" with strong ability to make the subject material accessible to her students, in Eubanks' assessment. The class itself, Eubanks said, "opens a lot of doors and helps a lot of people."

Classmate Queen Dobbs said, "Right now, I'm doing home health, and I worked in a nursing home part time, but I want to continue my education, because I might want to do hospice and stuff like that, because I love taking care of the elderly ... and anybody that needs help."

This is the CNA program's second year, and the first – 2020 – was rocked by COVID-19 precautions. Masks are still in place. Classes started Aug. 9.

"It's only \$600, and we are one of the very few CNA courses in the area. I think the next-closest one is Orangeburg," she added.

The next class begins Sept. 27, and sessions are held Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Classes take place at 6 Hickman Street, in Graniteville, and details are at 803-507-1102 (via text) and 803-640-1685 (for voice calls). The deadline for registration is Sept. 17.

[https://www.postandcourier.com/aikenstandard/news/local/training-provides-boost-toward-medical-careers/article\\_46c17d56-0cf7-11ec-aa41-bf2c80d057d0.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/aikenstandard/news/local/training-provides-boost-toward-medical-careers/article_46c17d56-0cf7-11ec-aa41-bf2c80d057d0.html)



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