

An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure



Sue Sheppard

As healthcare providers continue to look for new ways to improve care and lower costs, interest in complementary care is increasing. Normandale Community College is one of the most sought-after providers of Integrative Health training in the upper Midwest. Its programs and certifications offer professionals the opportunity to complement their expertise.

“As we work closely with our healthcare partners, we see more hospitals, clinics and other providers adopting a holistic approach to patient care helping to reduce healing time and stress.” says Sunny Ainley, Associate Dean of Health and Wellness at Normandale.

Many students have had transformational experiences as a result of the integrative training programs. Sandy McGurran has been a medical social worker for the past 20 years. Five years ago, she took her first Reiki Energy Therapy course at Normandale. McGurran notes that her exposure to Reiki has dramatically changed her practice of care. In her current role as a social worker and care manager for Healthcare and Hospice at Fairview, she works with patients who are recovering from an illness or suffer from pain, anxiety or depression.

“When I started using Reiki with my patients and realized the dramatic effect it had, I knew I had to pursue it further” said McGurran. “Reiki can be done in as little as a couple of minutes and it has made a significant impact on my patients, helping many of these patients to get to a place of peace and relaxation.”

Sue Sheppard is the Homecare Director for Fairview Homecare and Hospice. Sheppard has long been an innovator and proponent of care that focuses on the whole person. For the past five years she has been taking classes and earning certifications at Normandale, including Reiki, Qigong and Feng Shui.

“I thought the learning environment at Normandale was great,” said Sheppard. “I felt coming in that the courses would be higher quality and taught in a controlled environment, and they were. The other part that is amazing is the wide variety of courses Normandale offers. I am drawn like a magnet to continually take more”.

Sheppard has been at Fairview for 10 years and in the field for 25. She views these courses as a perfect opportunity to gain expertise and to offer this learning to her employees.



Nancy Crowell

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“My focus has been to introduce these techniques in the homecare arena,” said Sheppard. Interested in increasing the value and depth of care, Sheppard explains that “we have carried this forward by teaching hand massage and reflexology to our home health aid workers, and healing touch to our hospice volunteers,” always with a focus on improving client care.

Nancy Crowell has been a Vascular Nurse Clinician at Fairview Health Services for close to 15 years, working with patients before and after surgery for peripheral vascular disease. In 2006, she picked up a book about Qigong and immediately fell in love with it, leading her to take the Spring Forest Qigong and Aromatherapy training at Normandale.

“These classes were offered in a variety of great settings, and I really enjoyed interacting with both the students and the instructors.” Crowell continues to utilize integrative care in her work and is energized by the results “Qigong and aromatherapy often accelerate the healing in my patients.”

“When you look at the big picture, care is moving to whole-person care,” says Normandale Integrative Health instructor Sheila Judd. “Integrative therapies tie into whole-person care, whether it is from an emotional, mental or physical standpoint. This empowers patients to be able to play a bigger role in their own well-being.” Judd adds that Integrative Therapies also help medical professionals with self-care to cope with their own stress as well as bringing healing energy to the workplace for others.

As integrative practices continue to be adopted by healthcare providers, the type of insights, skills and passions seen in Sheppard, Crowell and McGurran will be ever more needed. Integrative practitioners are naturally suited for such leadership, given their training and commitment to optimizing health, treating wholly and utilizing natural approaches to support healthy partnerships between patients and caregivers.



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