

Free Supportive Care Assistant program available at Loyalist College

By Chris Drost

A free micro-certificate Supportive Care Assistant program is being delivered in Bancroft at Loyalist College. It is part of a program that is being delivered across Canada through Employment and Social Development Canada to address labour shortages in the health-care sector.

In the next 30 years, the number of Canadians aged 55 and over is expected to triple and the demand for health care workers to increase along with it. This program is for individuals who have an interest in working with older adults and those requiring assistance, have strong interpersonal skills, and are both friendly and flexible. Basic computer skills and regular access to a computer are also required. Students must have access to transportation and be available to work shifts, be able to stand, walk, bend, twist and be able to do some lifting.

The Supportive Care Assistant program includes six weeks of online training, 20 hours per week, and a two-month paid work placement, (280 hours), to be completed within 16 weeks. To be eligible, applicants must be 18 years or older, a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or person who has been granted refugee status and entitled to work in Canada. The program is not open to international students. For students whose first language is English, proof of proficiency is required. This can be a grade 10 English certificate or equivalent. For English as a second language speakers, proof of English skills will be required.

Students must also be able to complete Standard First Aid/CPR Level 3 and pass a vulnerable sector background check prior to admission.

The six-week program is presented in modules covering such topics as, professionalism, supportive client-centred assistance, communication, supportive assistance, and infection control and safety. Each module takes about 20 hours to complete.

The role of a SCA is to assist the health care team perform non-clinical activities. These could include, assisting at mealtime, providing companionship, comfort and support, assisting with grooming, dressing, elimination and hygiene, stocking materials required by clients and health-care staff, assisting with tidying, cleaning and disinfecting, encouraging and assisting clients with mobility, assisting and directing visitors, COVID-19 screen and participating in activities with clients.

Following the completion of the online portion of the program, students will be connected to an employer who will provide 280 hours of employment over a two-to-four-month period.

During the two-month work placement, students will work in long-term care, homecare, or assisted living settings. It will include practical, hands-on training and there will be opportunities to network with health-care professional and to learn more about a range of careers in the sector.

Once a student has successfully completed the six weeks of online training and the two-month work placement, they will be eligible for \$5,000 towards upgrading their skills to become a personal support worker, health care aide, continuing care assistant, etc.

The \$5,000 stipend is for graduates who decide to pursue further studies-care sector. It can be used for such expenses as tuition, certifications, dependent care, uniforms, transportation, etc.

There was considerable interest in the program at the recent job fair. Hopefully anyone wanting to work as a PSW or other health care professional, will consider taking advantage of this opportunity, says Jenna Douglas, from the Bancroft campus of Loyalist College.