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Phoebe Health Science Pathway Puts Students On a Path to Nursing Careers

Albany, Ga. – Robert Cornejo’s interest in healthcare started when he was just nine years old and his grandfather suffered a fall that left him with serious injuries. “I wanted to be able to do something to help him,” Robert said.

A couple of years ago when his grandfather’s condition worsened, Robert was able to help. “I would clean him and feed him. How I was able to help my grandpa, that’s what I want to do for other people” he said.

Soon, Robert will be helping other people in need of care. Even though he’s just a junior at Westover High School and the Commodore Conyers College & Career (4C) Academy, he’s on track to work as a paid intern at Phoebe next school year. “My next step is during my senior year of high school to do work-based learning in the hospital. It’s already advancing you along your career path you want to take, and it’s also preparing you for what you want to do later in life,” he said.

He’ll be following in the footsteps of Haley Carman, a senior at Westover and 4C, who is one of the first high school students to get a paid internship at Phoebe through the Phoebe Health Science Pathway. “I like being able to inspire other people because this is really a great opportunity that I want others to capitalize on,” Haley said.

Phoebe formally unveiled the groundbreaking pathway a year ago after months of work with 4C Academy, Albany Technical College (ATC), Albany State University (ASU), the Georgia Department of Education, the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia and the Southern Regional Education Board. The unique partnership puts 4C students on a fast track to careers in health professions.

After spending the 9th grade year learning about all the pathways at 4C and choosing healthcare, the students spend their entire 10th grade year at 4C completing the healthcare pathway. Through dual enrollment at ATC, they complete the qualifications for the Certified

Nurse Assistant (CNA) technical certificate the following year. These students also get their core college classes out of the way early through dual enrollment at ATC or ASU – at no cost.

By their senior year, they can work at Phoebe and earn their certification as a nurse assistant. Upon graduation, they can go directly into the nursing program at either ATC or ASU, giving them a head start on their nursing degree and their career.

“The Phoebe Health Science Pathway has generated a lot of interest among our students. One year in, it’s already paying off for them. We know it will continue to grow in the years to come, expanding our local healthcare workforce and creating rewarding and well-paying careers that will keep these talented students here in our area,” said Chris Hatcher, 4C Academy CEO.

Currently, there are 57 4C Academy students enrolled in the Phoebe Health Science Pathway. Twenty-two have taken part in (or are currently taking part in) hands-on clinical training rotations at Phoebe, five have worked in paid internships at the hospital, five have earned certification as nurse assistants and four have been accepted into college nursing programs. Fifty-six rising 10th graders have already signed up to join the program next year.

“The program has been so successful we have already expanded it to include an option for another credential. In addition to the CNA credential, students are also eligible to become a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant. After completing a year-long internship in one of Phoebe's outpatient clinics, they will be eligible to take the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant exam,” said Tracy Suber, EdD, Phoebe Vice President of Education. “It’s great that this partnership allows us to be so nimble to respond to the interests of the students and the workforce needs in our community.”

The students currently in the pathway are grateful for the opportunities it is providing them. “It’s giving me a real head start into life because lots of other people don’t figure out what they want to do with their lives until later on,” Haley said. “I’ve been given opportunities through 4C and Albany Tech to where I can be an intern at Phoebe and get lots of experience to help aid on my journey,” she added.

“It just helps you prepare for the future,” Robert said of the program. His future includes plans to enroll in ATC’s nursing program after he graduates high school next year, but that is far from the last step on his career journey. “After that, I’ll just continue climbing the ladder until ultimately, I’m a cardiologist,” he said.

The deadline to apply to the nursing program at ATC for fall semester is June 1. You can get more information and find an application link at www.NextInNursing.com. 4C Academy is a specialized charter school serving Dougherty, Terrell, Baker and Calhoun counties. Parents interested in enrolling their children in 4C Academy can talk to the guidance counselor at their home school or go to www.4cacademy.org to register.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: Attached photos show 4C Academy junior Robert Cornejo, 4C Academy senior Haley Carman and other students in the Phoebe Health Science Pathway at 4C.



