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Achievers: Clinic employees use scholarships to further education

By Ken Hedler
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Ken Hedler/The Daily Courier
Susan Cantrell, left, and Karen Angus are among five employees of West Yavapai Guidance Clinic who qualified for scholarships to pursue continuing education.

PRESCOTT VALLEY - Karen Angus and Susan Cantrell of the West Yavapai Guidance Clinic seek to take a national exam in April to qualify to become licensed associate counselors in Arizona.

Angus, an intake therapist, prepared for the exam by taking her final graduate-level class through Northcentral University, an online college based in Prescott Valley.

Her colleague, Cantrell, adult case manager, plans to earn a master's degree in counseling in December from the University of Great Falls in Montana.

Both women can achieve their goals thanks to scholarship money from the Northern Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authority. The Flagstaff-based authority is a nonprofit managed care organization that contracts with the clinic and other institutions.

The authority awarded about \$6,000 to Cantrell and just under \$2,000 to Angus through its Community Reinvestment program. The authority also presented scholarship money to three other clinic employees: Sharon Jackson, Amanda Kraus and Courtney Quatrano, who were unavailable for interviews with The Daily Courier.

The clinic has the most scholarship recipients of any institution within the authority's jurisdiction, according to Cantrell, who said 300 people applied for the scholarships. Cantrell and Angus said applicants wrote essays, and submitted college transcripts and letters of recommendation.

"From the clinic's perspective, we were thrilled that NARBHA was investing this money in staff development," said Laura Norman, director of development and communication at West Yavapai. She said the clinic treats 1,200 people with serious mental health problems.

Simple tasks such as waking up in the morning and taking medications are challenges for the mentally ill, said Cantrell, a two-year employee of the clinic. She works with 105 clients with serious mental illnesses.

"They teach me that my problems are small," Cantrell said.

Cantrell said she has worked in the mental health field for 20-plus years. By contrast, Angus, a clinic employee for 2.5 years, is a relative newcomer who stayed at home to raise three children - all adults now - and earned a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling in 1996 from Ohio State University.

Both women said passing the national exam will enable them to go into private practice after two years of supervised employment at the clinic.

However, Cantrell, of Chino Valley, and Angus, a Prescott Valley resident, said they plan to stay put because they like their jobs.

"I think there is a big need in this community for mental health services," Angus said.

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