



New scholarships for Alabama nursing students

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MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — New scholarships worth \$1,000 will be offered to students in licensed practical nursing programs at two-year colleges, state education officials announced on Monday.

Each of the 22 two-year Alabama schools that offer LPN training will receive two scholarships each year from the Alabama Nursing Home Association Education Foundation. The students, who will be selected by the dean of nursing, dean of students and financial aid director at each school, will receive \$500 each semester, for a total of \$1,000.

"We believe very strongly that that nursing function that we have is a critical part of who we are as a system and where we need to go," two-year college Chancellor Bradley Byrne said at a news conference. "Obviously, to get more people into these programs, we have to look at some of their financial needs."

About 4,000 of the 12,000 nursing students in the two-year college system are in three-semester LPN programs.

To be eligible for a scholarship, students must be Alabama residents enrolled in a public two-year college and must have completed the first semester of the LPN program with a GPA of at least 2.5. They must also perform part of their clinical work at a long-term care facility.

The scholarships will be available starting with the fall 2008 semester, and the money can be used for books, uniforms and other school-related expenses.

Foundation director Louis Cottrell, Jr., called licensed nurse practitioners the "helping hands that provide our residents a high quality of care."

"Our foundation wants to assist those pursuing a career in health care, and particularly of course the LPN program, and give them a helping hand with their school finances," Cottrell said.

Total education costs for an LPN student are estimated at about \$5,000 from start to finish, Byrne said. Once they start working, Cottrell said, licensed practical nurses make an average of \$16 an hour.

Most LPNs work in long-term care nursing homes. Cottrell said there is an apparent shortage of practical nurses in the state, which was part of the motivation behind establishing the scholarships.

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