Washington County’s Health Professional to RN Bridge Program is Expanding
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The Washington County Archway Partnership Executive Committee established the need for increased access to health care professionals, such as Registered Nurses (RNs) and physicians, as a top priority in 2009. The RN Bridge Program officially launched in 2009 and continues to expand.

The Washington County Archway Partnership began the program by facilitating meetings with officials from the Washington County Regional Medical Center (WCRMC), representatives from Oconee Fall Line Technical College (formerly known as Sandersville Technical College), potential healthcare employers, and community leaders to assess the level of interest in a health care professional to RN Bridge Program. Survey results had indicated that it would be a great asset to the community and was strongly supported. Following the positive response by the community, the partners moved forward with planning and implementation.

The WCRMC and the OFTC created a partnership to establish the EMT/LPN to RN Bridge Program at the technical college. Darton College, located in Albany, also agreed to create a Bridge Program branch at the OFTC Sandersville campus.

The first class cohort of 27 students officially began in October 2009 and upon graduation in December 2010, 26 of the 27 students passed state boards on their first attempt. The second cohort graduated in December 2011 with 29 students. Considering the growing interest in the program, Darton College decided to expand. With over 170 students who were tested for the new year, two more instructors were hired to teach and the new cohort began in October 2011 with 64 students.

“It is such a pleasure to teach these students because they are non-traditional, experienced, and have a vested interest in learning,” said Marla Johnson, MSN, RN, and Professional to RN Bridge Program instructor.

Advancing Community Priorities: The Washington County Archway Partnership established that community health was a top priority in 2007 and increased access to health care professionals was a key factor in improving overall health. The RN Bridge Program helps create new healthcare professionals directly in Washington County.