

Sacred Vocation program reinforces hospital system's ideals

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DALLAS—[Baylor Scott & White Health's](#) Sacred Vocation program—a branch of the healthcare system's Faith in Action Initiatives—will extend to all North Texas hospitals in the fall, and the program continues to expand in Central Texas, as well.

✘ Sacred Vocations Facilitator Miles Range (left), a retired respiratory therapist, and Don Sewell (right), director of Faith in Action Initiatives for Baylor Scott & White Health, congratulate employees Naytasha Beasley and Tammy Villarreal upon their successful completion of the Sacred Vocations class. (PHOTO / Courtesy of Baylor Scott & White Health)[Sacred Vocation](#) encourages hospital employees to live purpose-driven and meaningful lives, as well as to work toward their calling. The program was designed at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. It has been a part of the office of mission and ministries at Baylor Scott & White Health for 10-plus years, and it boasts more than 2,500 graduates.

"I'm happy to be a champion and cheerleader for a great program like this," said Mark Grace, the chief mission and ministry officer for Baylor Scott & White Health. "It embodies the heart and soul of what we're about as a Christian ministry."

Healing and the value of human life

The program lasts six weeks and six sessions, and during that time, employees of all positions and levels in the hospital participate in the

course for 90 minutes each session. Classes are small, and each session involves participants in discussions of topics like healing and harming, oaths and goals as a healthcare professional, and the value of a human life.

“This is a unique way to help people choose to be the best that they can be in living their life of purpose and meaning through their work,” said Elizabeth “Chick” Deegan, the program manager of spiritual support. “By doing that, they then treat patients with more compassion, dignity and respect, and then they do that with each other, as well.”

In the first session, the employees are asked to write their own eulogy and must ask themselves what legacy they will leave behind. Through the program, participants set goals and learn to recognize the value of healthcare professions as they consider the big picture of their career, said Tiffanie Diaz, the executive assistant to the vice president and chief nursing officer at Baylor Plano.

Nurturing of the soul

“God has me here for a reason, and he had me in the class for a reason,” said Diaz, who also is the chair of the Sacred Vocation Council at Baylor Plano. “I intertwined every aspect of that class with faith. It’s really about nurturing our soul and doing good in life.”

Sacred Vocation connects personal faith to personal calling and challenges employees to treat patients and each other with respect and keep healing in mind, an overall theme at Baylor Scott & White, leaders of the Faith in Action Initiatives noted.

“We’re dedicated to be the best place to receive care. So, this program that’s based on engaging people around their value and faith identity has practical benefits,” Grace said.

While the program uses personal calling and faith as a platform, it doesn’t

directly tie into a particular set of doctrines, which allows employees of all or no faith to participate.

“Within our work force, we have those of all faiths,” Deegan said. “So, we try to help people find ways to let their light shine and live their faith in the world, because that’s part of who they are, and it’s what fulfills their personal mission and purpose and meaning.”

Increased job satisfaction

The program has increased job satisfaction and retention, Grace said.

It helps connect hospital employees in a support system by teaching them they all have the same emotions, experiences and frustrations in the workplace, Diaz added.

“It cemented into me that I’m where I need to be. Even though I’m not clinical, I make an impact to patients every day. It’s about not only making an impact with our patients but an impact with our coworkers,” she said.

At Baylor Plano, Sacred Vocation graduates are celebrated for their accomplishments and welcomed into a community of employees who appreciate their job. Graduates reconnect twice a year and go on a yearly retreat, as well.

Not only is Sacred Vocation useful in the workplace, but also graduates and facilitators of the program agree their personal lives are affected positively, Deegan said.

Susan Thompson, an occupational therapist and facilitator of Sacred Vocation, agrees the program’s mission reinforces the values the hospital system and its Faith in Action Initiatives stand for.

“We focus on being healers and trying to maintain our jobs as a sacred place for working God’s mission on Earth loving others,” she said. “It

realigns and strengthens the connection between their belief in God and their mission on earth.”