Illinois Health and Hospital Association

A 16-bed critical access hospital, Franklin Hospital has been meeting the healthcare needs of Benton, a city of about 6,700, and surrounding rural communities since 1955. In recent years, the hospital has expanded services, upgraded facilities and equipment, and partnered with other healthcare providers for specialty services and emergency care.

Franklin Hospital's latest partnerships seek to address the critical shortage of clinicians impacting hospitals throughout the state and nationwide. Through its partnership with Rend Lake College, the hospital offers students the opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom at the bedside. To get this hands-on learning, students in nursing, phlebotomy and radiology go on rounds with hospital clinicians.

The hospital's goal is to train and recruit future clinicians to continue meeting the healthcare needs of the communities it serves.

"Our hope is that by collaborating with local educational institutions, offering incentives, and highlighting the benefits of rural healthcare, we inspire students to serve our local community and join our team when they complete the education," the hospital said.

In another partnership, with John A. Logan College, hospital staff help equip phlebotomy students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential to providing high-quality patient care.

What's more, in 2024, Franklin Hospital launched a Medical Explorers Post for high school and college students interested in healthcare careers. The program showcases healthcare careers and gives students the chance to participate in hands-on activities and meet healthcare professionals.

In 2025, the hospital announced additional recruitment strategies: scholarship programs for nursing and respiratory therapy and a summer externship for future nurses. For each scholarship, those considered must live in the hospital's service area and be accepted at a local southern Illinois college. After the student graduates and obtains licensure, the individual must work at the hospital for two years.

"As we prepare for future opportunities and challenges, Franklin Hospital is committed to doing the best we can to serve our community with excellence and provide quality healthcare, close to home," Franklin Hospital CEO James Johnson says in a message on the hospital website.

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