

HEALTHCARE CAREER CLASSES OFFERED AT CCHS



Above: Lane Hamilton gives Melanie Meza a "thumbs-up" after she successfully drew some red liquid from her mannequin.



Above: Phlebotomy students Ximena Balderas, Jacquelyn Vasquez, and Sherlyn Sanchez practice drawing "blood" from a mannequin's arm during a recent class.

By Ron Barry

Reading, writing, and arithmetic – that used to describe a school's curriculum offerings.

But how about phlebotomy, optometry, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation? Ever have those as options in your school?

Well, there ARE classes covering those subjects in the new Career Technical Education (CTE) building at Crockett County High School.

So on any given day, if you peek into a couple of the classrooms, you may see students drawing blood (the science of phlebotomy) from a rubber mannequin, or administering stitches to another one, or practicing CPR skills on yet another. Some students may be assessing eye charts, naming the bones of the body, or studying emergency medical services.

It's all part of a healthcare curriculum taught by instructors Cindi Thompson, Candace Stallings, and Gayla Mayfield, and it's designed to help students obtain actual certifications in certain areas such as nursing education, CPR, and as cardiovascular technicians. Students can even gain college credit for taking a medical terminology class.

"We have a lot of students interested in healthcare careers," Thompson said. "So we want to do our best to get them ready, and give them a head start as they pursue it further."

Thompson's classroom – where she teaches diagnostic medicine, among other things – contains everything from eye charts on the walls to mannequins that "bleed" to equipment that allows students to simulate the stitching of a wound. They can even learn to perform an EKG for a heart patient or prepare a radiology subject.

On one of the days the students were learning phlebotomy skills, Thompson wandered around the room from table to table making sure each student was getting the hang of it – because, as she pointed out to them, when you're actually doing it in a hospital or clinic, it isn't always easy to find a vein in a patient.

"When I was a practicing nurse, I had to draw blood once from a man who had been an addict," she told the students. Hiking her leg up on a table, she rolled up a pant leg and said, "And he told me the only place I was going to be able to get any blood was from between his toes. So sometimes, if you ask a patient on the front end if they have a preference as to where you try to make your stick, they'll make it easier for you."

It's practical advice like that which Thompson adds to the more technical aspects of the subject matter that help her students understand the healthcare process better.

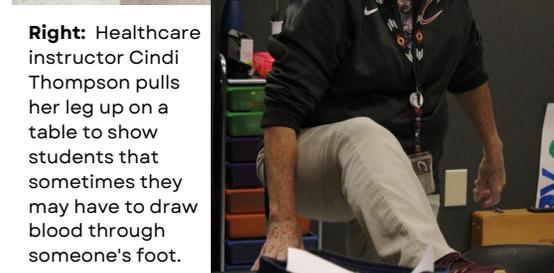
"We want our students to be fully equipped when they leave here," Thompson said. "For a rural school to have facilities like this, we're extremely thankful. And we have some outstanding students that pass through these classes."

It's just another way the Crockett County School District is expanding the variety of study options for its young people.

Right: Thompson moves down on the floor to make sure students are learning the proper procedure for performing CPR on an adult.



Left: Other students were learning the intricacies of applying CPR to an infant.



Right: Healthcare instructor Cindi Thompson pulls her leg up on a table to show students that sometimes they may have to draw blood through someone's foot.

