

# FOUR-OF-FOUR CCHS STUDENTS PASS CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT TEST

## By Ron Barry

You might think – if you're a high school student curious about a future in the medical field – that the first obstacle to overcome is dealing with the sight of blood or some similar undesirable visual.

"No," Crockett County senior Melanie Meza is quick to correct – "it's the smells." "Absolutely, the smells," echo her classmates Lane Hamilton, Sediya Little, and Angela Bolanos.

Well, then... medically speaking... here's something that doesn't stink: These four CCHS students all passed the Certified Nursing Assistant test, qualifying each of them to immediately work in a medical facility under the supervision of a licensed nurse.

CNAs, also known as nurses' assistants or nurses' aides, provide basic care to patients, often in nursing homes. They can monitor vital signs, log patient information, stock medical supplies, act as a liaison between patients and medical staff, and perform tasks such as bathing, dressing, and feeding.

To gain the certification, Crockett's students had to complete 67 classroom hours of instruction and a minimum of 60 clinical hours, pass a 100-question written exam (with a minimum 75 correct answers), and prove competency in five random nursing skills (requiring 80% efficiency).

The nursing students – primarily under the instruction of Candy Stallings in their upper level courses – begin with a Health Science course as freshmen, Medical Therapeutics as sophomores, Anatomy & Physiology as juniors, and Nursing Education as seniors. The Nursing Education block includes the clinical component, which the students conducted at Bells Nursing & Rehabilitation Center.

"These students have done an outstanding job," Stallings says. "They have to be disciplined, because our day begins at 7:30 a.m., ready to go – not just show up at 7:30, but be ready for the first task."

The four students have similar stories about deciding to enter Crockett's health professional classes. All four said they began with a basic curiosity about the options that are available in the medical field.

"We're certified assistants now," Meza says, "and if we want to gain additional levels of nursing degrees, we have that option."

"I haven't decided yet on a set course of action," Hamilton says. "I may end up wanting to become a doctor rather than a nurse."

Bolanos agreed with her classmates that nurses have a tough job, often with very long shifts that are pressure-packed. That's one of the reasons Little is already considering moving more into the psychological area of medicine.

"I really think that will be more of where my interest lies," says Little, who – along with Stallings – is a fan of the medical show *House*, which featured a brilliant diagnostician who could identify just about any malady in time, but dealt with personal issues that often kept him at odds with the rest of the medical staff.

The students also agreed that, generally, the most difficult part of their clinicals is catheterization, even more than drawing blood. But they unanimously were complimentary of the patients they worked with in Bells.

"They were appreciative of us," Little says. "I didn't see anyone hesitant to deal with us just because we're still in high school."

Crockett's health sciences curriculum – which also features Gayla Mayfield and Shay Lynne Galvin as instructors, along with Stallings – has been in place for several years. When students reach the senior level, they can take the CNA exam if they choose, but it isn't a requirement. The school's program, however, is evaluated every two years, and must equal or surpass an 80% "pass" rate of the number of students who take the exam.

"We're five-for-five in the last two semesters," Stallings says, "so we've had good success with our classes. It looks great on a college resumé to have a CNA certification, so we're very proud of these four."

And maybe their futures will smell a little sweeter than what they've encountered in their clinicals.



**Left:** CCHS students (left to right) Angela Bolanos, Sediya Little, Lane Hamilton, and Melanie Meza all successfully passed the Certified Nursing Assistant exam recently. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Right:** Crockett's newest crew of nurses demonstrate some of the tasks that CNAs are qualified to perform, using Melanie Meza as the patient. Sediya Little works on improving Meza's range of motion with her right arm and shoulder; Angela Bolanos makes sure Meza's heart sounds in synch; and Lane Hamilton checks Meza's pulse. (Photo by Ron Barry)

