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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

***Glencoe District High School students embark on experiential learning program at Four Counties Health Services***

**(Strathroy, ON) –** Glencoe District High School (GDHS) students have been taking part in an innovative, first-of-its-kind program for the Thames Valley District Board (TVDSB). As part of the Fall semester’s experiential learning curriculum, 10 students have been shadowing staff in 12 departments at the Four Counties Health Services (FCHS) site of the Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA).

Earlier this year, hospital administrators and school leaders met to discuss possible partnerships, and realized early on that there was an emerging need for students to have an increased awareness of what roles are required to run a health care facility. “When FCHS reached out to GDHS to explore project ideas, none of us knew the extent to which the experiential learning program would prove to be so successful,” says Steph Ouellet, VP Strategic Partnerships at MHA.

The Community Connected Experiential Learning (CCEL) Initiative provided a perfect opportunity to achieve those goals. “CCEL provides the framework for students to be immersed in meaningful experiences while highlighting the importance of metacognition; thinking about thinking. When students are given the space to reflect, extract meaning from, and apply what they have learned, learning becomes relevant and curriculum can be connected to the real world,” says Nikita Miller, Experiential Learning Lead at TVDSB. In its inaugural year, the program allows students to shadow the following areas: Physiotherapy, Food Services, Housekeeping, Diagnostic Imaging (X-ray), Information Technology, Inpatient Nursing, Inpatient Administration, Adult Day Program, Hospital Foundation, Health and Safety, Infection Control, and the Diabetes Education Program.

Thus far, the experience has given the students a really great understanding of the importance of multiple staff working together to service patients needs. “I've realized that the hospital staff isn't just all about nurses and doctors. It's been really eye-opening.” says Jess Underwood, a Grade 12 GDHS participant. Students have also been impressed with the breadth and depth of care provided to patients. “My favourite area has been the Physiotherapy department because of the interaction with people. They are all so welcoming and helpful”, says Zach Power, another Grade 12 participant from GDHS.

Hospital and school administrators are equally pleased with the partnership and the program’s results thus far. Now that the students have had a general exposure to multiple areas of a hospital’s operations, it will provide them with new ideas for potential career paths that might not have been identified otherwise. In fact, interested students could also participate in a longer coop term placement in the winter semester should there be a particular area of interest. Jim Rops, Co-op Lead Teacher at GDHS, stated that “the whole purpose for an Experiential Learning opportunity is for students to be exposed to a variety of career options. Once they see what this career entails, they can make an informed decision on a post-secondary pathway. The partnership with the hospital has given students a “real world” experience that will be very valuable for their future.”

This program clearly provides long-term benefits for the community as a whole, particularly if participating students were to embark on a health care field and eventually choose to work “close to home”. “I look forward to a time in the future when a CCEL participant returns to FCHS to start their healthcare career. It would be a great testament to their commitment to their community, and to the evolving partnership between FCHS and GDHS,” says Kim Jenkins.

About MHA:

The Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA) is comprised of two fully-accredited partner sites: Four Counties Health Services and Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital.

A progressive, team-oriented and technologically adept organization of excellence, the MHA is creating a more integrated and seamless approach to treatment by embracing and seeking out partnerships, through collaboration and investing in people. This coordinated approach helps to ensure that a high level of service is provided while reducing costs and continually enhancing quality.

About GDHS:

As one of the smaller, rural schools in the Thames Valley District School Board, Glencoe has the unique challenge of offering programs that cater to all abilities and interests. Glencoe District High School strives to help students find their best path to a post-secondary career, and this particular Experiential Learning opportunity offers our Senior Academic students a chance to experience a labour force when they might not otherwise have had a chance to take a traditional Co-op class. Partnering with our local hospital is an invaluable resource that may foster growth and the skills required in the twenty-first century labour force.