

## Tomorrow's healthcare professionals learn about career paths today at Treasure Coast conference

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(Photo: CONTRIBUTED BY CANDY MARLOW)

PORT ST. LUCIE – Nurses, nursing aides, home health aides, and medical technologists are in high demand locally. Hospitals, clinics and health services have more open positions than qualified applicants.

A group of Treasure Coast educators and employers is doing something about that.

On March 6, 162 Martin and St. Lucie County high school students attended the first Future Healthcare Professionals of the Treasure Coast Conference at the Port St. Lucie Community Center.

The conference, organized by the Healthcare Roundtable of the Treasure Coast, offered the students workshops in soft skills, financial aid opportunities, career pathways, and task management/critical thinking.

"Our goal was to introduce high school students who have expressed interest in a healthcare career to the educational and job opportunities that are out there for them, and to highlight some of the underlying skill sets that can make the difference between success and disappointment in their field," said Leslie Haviland, Healthcare Roundtable chair and associate director of student services for the Port St. Lucie campus of Keiser University.

"A lot of students know what a nurse is, and what a doctor is, but they don't know about what a physician's assistant, or a respiratory therapist, or a dietician does. So that's what we're trying to do, to show them that there are lots of different career paths," said Haviland.

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"I want to become a traveling nurse because that's just really what I'm into. I love travelling, I love seeing new places and I really love helping people. So, I feel that would be the perfect job for me," said Centennial High School student Courtney Maloy. "Today's event was actually very helpful because I've never heard some of these things before, and it's really eye-opening. And we have all these opportunities that are available to us, and it's really going to prepare us for the future."



"Opening up the lines of communication between students, educators and trainers, employers and other healthcare professionals is an outgrowth of the Skills Gap Study the EDC sponsored last year," said Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County President Pete Tesch. (Photo: FILEMITCH KLOORFAIN)

"This student conference is just one of the initiatives the Healthcare Roundtable has been working on," said Pete Tesch, president of the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC). "Opening up the lines of communication between students, educators and trainers, employers and other healthcare professionals is an outgrowth of the Skills Gap Study the EDC sponsored last year. It is a way to begin bridging the gap."

The roundtable is an EDC committee.

"It's not just clinical and technical skills that tomorrow's healthcare workforce will need," said Brian Bauer, President/CEO of CareerSource Research Coast. "This conference will help the students discover some healthcare careers they may not have considered before, learn about how to finance their education and hopefully understand more about the soft and critical thinking skills they'll need to land and keep a job."

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"The City of Port St. Lucie's sponsorship contributed to the success of the event. The City's support aligns with its strategic goal to partner with community groups to benefit Port St. Lucie students."

Sponsorships not only paid for the conference but also raised funds for healthcare scholarships for local students.

Sponsors included ABC Home Medical Supply, Fortis Institute, Florida State University College of Medicine, Indian River Medical Center, Indian River State College, Keiser University, Martin Health System, Midway Specialty Care Clinic, SandyPines, Senior Helpers of the Treasure Coast, Spherion Staffing, Treasure Coast Urgent and Family Care, and Treasure Health.

## About the Healthcare Roundtable of the Treasure Coast

The Healthcare Roundtable of the Treasure Coast was established in 2017 as a committee of the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County. The committee's mission is to provide an open forum and connection between educators, healthcare employers, and current and prospective healthcare employees, with the goal of successfully meeting local healthcare employment needs.