

Nurse outlines duties

Rewards found in blue collar world

By SHERRY KAHAN

The Occupation health field is expanding and so are the jobs, says nurse Frieda Jossens.

Speaking at a recent career conference at Madonna College in Livonia,

"It is sophisticated and diversified work. You have the freedom to make your own nursing diagnosis and to be responsible for what goes on,"

-Frieda Jossens, occupational nurse

she urged the young women in the audience to consider becoming an occupational health nurse.

"If a girl is looking for an interesting job, this is it," she stated. "It is sophisticated and diversified work. It is fascinating to be in industry. You have freedom to make your own nursing diagnosis and to be responsible for what goes on."

For the most part nurses who work in factories such as the Fruehauf Corp., which employs Mrs. Jossens, deal with cuts and bruises. In the case of a broken leg or arm they do basic first aid and send the injured person to the hospital.

They also take pre-employment X-rays, EKGs and do eye, ear and pulmonary function tests.

"We also go out into the plant and check masks used by the workers involved with volatile gas," she added. "We make sure the proper apparel is available in areas where chemicals are used."

"We admonish people to wear safety glasses and ear plugs. We have a hearing conservation program. We have to know about job requirements so that employees can be matched with jobs they are physically capable of handling."

"We do alcoholism and drug counseling and make referrals," she continued, adding that an occupational health nurse must know much more than medical subjects.

"We have to know civil law, workers' compensation law and industrial law," she noted. "We must know something about business and management. We do a great deal of paper work, ordering of supplies and budgeting."

As federal legislation such as the Occupational Safety and Health Act is implemented in the nation's industry, the opportunities for jobs continues to grow. At present there are about 1,500 certified occupational nurses in the U.S. and Canada, and as Mrs. Jossens puts it, "We do everything."

A prerequisite for becoming an occupational health nurse is a registered nurse's license. Candidates with a nursing degree are preferred. Mrs. Jossens suggested two to three years of experience in hospital medical, sur-

gical and emergency departments as well.

She also advised that a first job in industry be with a firm that employs several nurses. "There is an awful lot to learn, and learning by yourselves is

not the best way," she observed.

To become certified as an occupational health nurse, 60 extra hours of education are needed before the nurse takes the certification board examinations.



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Labor leaders fight for women workers in area factories

Two of the biggest problems women have always had are the lack of as much strength as men, and being stuck in low-paying jobs.

"Women don't have the same strength men have," she conceded, "but the company used that as an excuse to keep us in low-paying jobs. Then, it would turn around and make us do the same work as men without the same pay."

The Taylor resident remembered an incident that happened to her about 15 years ago.

She tried to apply for an opening as a sewing machine repair person, one of the higher-paying, more prestigious jobs at Fisher Body.

"They wouldn't even accept my application," she said. "They told me a woman couldn't lift a 90-pound machine head by herself."

"They didn't say anything at all about the fact that the men use hoists to lift those machine heads," she continued. "That was the excuse that kept me in a low-paying assembler's job."

Maybe, she said, that's when she started looking to the union for a "fair shake."

She joined the district committee first as an alternate and later became a full-time member. A district committee, which is responsible for about 200-300 workers, listens to and tries to correct problems of the membership.

For several years she slowly rose in union ranks until last June, when she was elected vice-chairwoman of the local.

Her duties require attending daily district meetings and weekly bargaining committee meetings which include representatives from both union and management.

She listens to the problems of the 300 persons she represents in the women-dominated plant. She then must decide if a problem should be put in writing, at which point it becomes a grievance.

"Although at least two-thirds of the people who work at Fisher Body are women, until 10 years ago we had virtually no women to represent us in the union,"

-UAW Rep. Gina Spencer

The grievance is then handed to the shop committee and the local's recording secretary, who, hopefully, solves the problem.

In many ways, she feels women have begun to get their fair share at Fisher Body.

"A job in the cutting room is one of the better jobs," she said. "Until about six years ago, there were no women in there. Now we have succeeded in getting about 20 working as cutters."

"Twenty out of 225 is not a great number but it's a heck of a lot better than before," she added. "And we're going to keep on working."

"We don't want any special privileges. We just want to get our fair share."

She works to get better jobs for women both as a member of the executive board and as chairwoman of the women's committee.

Mrs. Spencer says the problems women suffer at Fisher Body are just like those at any other plant in the Detroit area.

"It's just that at Fisher Body the inequities are much more visible because so many more women work in that plant than men."

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