

EDUCATION

# Practical experience

## Hands-on training opportunity motivates student

**H**ailey Blackburn always has enjoyed helping older people. "Since I was about 10, I'd open doors for people in wheelchairs, help them to their cars, and carry their groceries for them," she said.

That's why she decided to enroll in the health assistant program at the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center during her freshman year at Windber Area High School.

The program allows Hailey to receive hands-on clinical experiences.

"(At clinical), we do the same stuff a normal nurse does," she said. "Such as feeding (patients) and helping them get cleaned up."

Hailey became so interested in her studies at the the career center that she decided the practice she received in the classroom wasn't enough. So she started volunteering her time at Windber Medical Center.

completing the program or to transfer their credits to a local university to pursue a BSN degree.

Hailey received The Challenge Program's Most Community Service award

last year for her volunteer work at Windber Medical Center. The award was sponsored by Bill Polacek of JWF Industries.

Conemaugh Health System is also a sponsor of The Challenge Program.



THE CHALLENGE PROGRAM  
**Kayla Washko**

Her duties there include helping to feed older patients and transporting them to the X-ray department. She has been volunteering there for more than two years.

Her enthusiasm to help seniors even has inspired one of Hailey's closest friends to start volunteering with her at Windber Medical Center.

"She started asking me questions about what I did up there and (after I told her), she thought it'd be fun, too," Hailey said.

Hailey now is a junior and plans to continue her education in a health-related field after graduation.

She says she would like to attend Conemaugh School of Nursing, where the curriculum gives students the option to either take the RN licensure exam after

*This article is part of a human interest series that will feature past recipients of The Challenge Program's four award categories: Most Improved, Best G.P.A., Most Community Service and Best Attendance. The Challenge Program is a nonprofit organization located in Johnstown that provides financial incentives to students for successes they achieve while still in high school. The Challenge Program also aims to provide a bridge between high school students and the local business community.*

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