



NEWS RELEASE

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Career Pathway Program at MAHEC a Finalist for Community Grant

Voting by the public will help determine the 12 non-profits awarded \$10,000 each

Asheville, NC, June 28, 2023— The available pool of qualified medical assistants to serve Asheville area residents is declining. And yet, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of [medical assistants](#) is projected to grow 16 percent from 2021 to 2031.

MAHEC—Mountain Area Health Education Center—has developed a program to address this workforce challenge. Known as the Medical Assistant Pathway Program, the initiative also advances equity and inclusion by introducing and exposing Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and other healthcare professionals—especially underrepresented individuals—to a formal career pathway.

The innovative MAHEC program is a finalist for a \$10,000 grant as part of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce’s recognition of its 125th anniversary. Twelve local non-profits whose work aligns with the Chamber’s efforts to build long-term economic vitality and viability, solving problems to move the community forward, will be chosen by popular vote to receive grant funding.

Members of the public can vote online for MAHEC once per day, per email address, daily through July 31 at mahec.net/vote. Grant recipients will be announced on Sept. 28 at the Chamber’s [125th Anniversary Celebration](#).

The Medical Assistant Pathway Program provides candidates with 16 weeks of training to prepare them for clinical work and achieving credentials as a Certified Medical Assistant (CMA). By offering scholarships, employment, and educational support to underrepresented individuals, the program aims to bridge healthcare disparities while also improving retention rates, reducing turnover, and enhancing job satisfaction.

The initiative helps build a sustainable clinical workforce and provides a valuable professional development opportunity for Buncombe County healthcare workers, expanding opportunities for those who might not otherwise be able to pay for a traditional medical assistant education. This will ultimately benefit regional residents and businesses.

“I would say that this program is absolutely amazing! I was able to work and go to school and still get paid on days I went to school, and also learn while at work,” said Tranace Timmons, previously a CNA and now a CMA at MAHEC Family Health Center at Biltmore, who was among the first participants in the Pathways initiative. “It’s a great program, especially for single mothers like myself that struggle with trying to keep a full-time job and also go to school... I highly recommend this program for anybody looking to get ahead in their healthcare career as a CNA!”

Mountain Area Health Education Center

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About MAHEC

Established nearly five decades ago, MAHEC – Mountain Area Health Education Center – is a leader in healthcare, education, and innovation. Headquartered in Asheville with satellite offices in [various locations](#) across its 16-county Western North Carolina service area, MAHEC is the largest of nine [Area Health Education Centers](#) in North Carolina. With more than 1,000 employees, MAHEC’s mission is to recruit, train and retain the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina, with a focus on primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources.

MAHEC’s 14-acre Biltmore campus is also home to [UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC](#), an academic health center in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill that includes programs from the UNC School of Medicine, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, and UNC Adams School of Dentistry. A private, [501\(c\)3 nonprofit organization](#), MAHEC will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2024. For more information, visit mahec.net and follow MAHEC on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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