

MV senior finds path to success through AVC

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MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Area Vocational Center is seeing success in its career and technical education, in particular for several students studying in the medical field.

Katlin Hicks, a senior at Mt. Vernon Township High School, is one of four students who began a five-step plan implemented by the AVC and St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital.

Robert Knutson, director of the AVC, said representatives from St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital

approached him five years ago and wanted to create a program that would get students interested in the medical field and keep them in Mt. Vernon. A program was created in which students who qualified would be placed on the fast track to receive their certified nursing assistant certificate a year earlier than other students at the AVC, effectively skipping a year of study.

"Before, you got your CNA the summer of your senior year, but the fast track allows you to skip a step," Knutson said.

Fast-trackers, of which there

are four in the senior class this year, skip career classes learning medical terminology and physiology as well as job shadowing, and go straight into working in the field and taking the Health Care Aide class and taking the CNA test as well.

Hicks applied for a position at St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital through the cooperative education program, and has been working in the surgery department. The three other fast-trackers in the senior class have been

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working at nursing homes in the area.

Part of the five-year plan between the AVC and St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital is that the hospital hopes to help pay for fast-tracker's college courses and bring them back to Mt.

Vernon after college, "if things go well," Knutson said.

The program is also helpful because it helps students earn over 10 college credits, Knutson said.

"It really gets kids a head start," he said.

The hospital wanted to help out, Knutson said, because the AVC is beneficial to local employers.

"They're looking for

home-grown people to fill these positions, because they typically stay," he said.

The first step of the five-year plan is for students in their career classes as freshmen to hear from medical professionals at St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital about what kind of opportunities there are available in Mt. Vernon.

"A number of people didn't know about the opportu-

nities they have right here," Knutson said. "There are good jobs."

Knutson and Hicks made a presentation about the success of the fast-track program to the MVTHS board during its regular board meeting Monday. Knutson praised the board for their support and leadership.

"We had the pleasure of reporting that the plan worked," he said.