

## THE “REAL WORLD”? IT’S HERE AT UCH

*By Bill Kaluza*

Many high schoolers know “The Real World” as a long-running show on MTV that features young people engaging in plenty of aimless talk and partying. But the students from Denver’s Arrupe Jesuit High School know better. They’re here at UCH, taking part in a rigorous work-study program that puts them in real jobs, completing real tasks, and gaining valuable

experience while they earn money to pay their way through school.

*Arrupe’s corporate work-study program gives students an opportunity to do real work in a professional setting.*



*Olivia Martinez, a senior at Arrupe, at work at the Ophthalmology Clinic.*

**A model program.** The school is part of the Cristo Rey Network, a national association of high schools. Each school in the network has its own curriculum, but all operate a corporate work-study program modeled after the successful one run by the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago. For the current school year Arrupe has placed its work-study students in nearly 100 metro Denver organizations from a broad range of industries.



*Arrupe freshman Amaris Montoya is a great help in the daunting Human Resources file room.*

The eight students now contracted to UCH work in job-sharing teams of four. One team works in Human Resources, the other in the Ophthalmology clinic.

Each student puts in five full days per month on a schedule that accommodates his or her classes. The students are employees of the work-study program, which provides transportation to and from the hospital and handles all payroll issues.

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Students use the money they earn to help offset the cost of their college-preparatory education at Arrupe.

**Doing real work.** Arrupe students come to work their first day trained in office software applications and equipment, practiced in customer service skills, and aware of proper dress and office etiquette.

Mame Fuhrman, HR employment manager, has worked with Arrupe students every year since 2004. The tasks she assigns them include setting up orientation for new employees, entering data to spreadsheets and databases, looking up and gathering information, running reports, and handling phones.

“If you have basic work that needs to be done on a regular basis,” Fuhrman says, “absolutely [they can help]. And you don’t need to hire an FTE to do it.”

The UCH Ophthalmology Clinic is busy and staff is often crunched for time, says practice manager Loretta Todaro, who saw right away how Arrupe’s work-study students could lend a hand processing medical records.

The job demands focus and accuracy, Todaro says, but the students learned quickly how to print and file charts, and sort, scan, and transfer patient medical data. She’s so pleased with their performance and attitude that she’d like to spread the word about the program to other areas in the hospital.

“It’s such a wonderful program,” Todaro says. She applauds Arrupe for giving economically disadvantaged students the chance to work and succeed in a professional setting – an opportunity that many would not have otherwise had. “A lot of these kids could not visualize themselves working in [a] professional environment. That’s one of the powerful things about this [program],” remarks Todaro.

**It’s a win-win.** Other departments in the hospital could benefit from participating in the Arrupe work-study program, Fuhrman says, adding that she envisions clinics sharing students between them.

She believes that the Arrupe students could help tackle all kinds of paperwork, from records to purchasing. “Any department that has routine jobs that don’t require specialized training, these students can do,” Fuhrman says.

Todaro’s enthusiasm for the work-study program stems in part from the obvious affection she has for the students she works with.



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Similarly, Fuhrman says of her Arrupe students, “We tend to adopt them and make them part of our HR family.” Some of her colleagues have attended birthday parties and graduation ceremonies for the work-study students they had on staff.

The hospital’s participation in the program, both add, helps it remain an active partner in the community.

*The Arrupe work-study program is now placing students for the upcoming contract year. For more information about the program, visit <http://www.arrupejesuit.com> or call Mame Fuhrman at x86810.*