



ADRIAN NIEOCZYM/CAPITAL NEWS

PRACTICAL NURSING graduates line up for their graduation ceremony at Okanagan College's Kelowna campus on Friday.

Practical nursing grads needed

By **ADRIAN NIEOCZYM**
EDUCATION REPORTER

Okanagan College sent 22 practical nursing graduates out into a hot job market on Friday.

After surviving and passing the yearlong program, the 22 men and women donned caps and gown for their graduation ceremony at the Kelowna campus.

"It was an intense 12 months, so it's amazing to be done," said this year's valedic-

torian, Shelby Griffith.

Practical nurses assist doctors and registered nurses in providing health care, mostly in hospital and residential care settings.

They take vital signs, such as blood pressure, temperature, pulse and respirations.

They distribute medication to patients, treat bedsores, prepare and give injections and enemas, apply aseptic dressings, insert catheters and perform other personal treatment.

They help patients with bathing, dressing and personal hygiene. They feed them, keep them comfortable and care for their emotional needs.

And as with other health care professions, there is a shortage of practical nurses which is expected to grow as our population ages.

Interior Health is developing a program to recruit foreign practical nurses in anticipation of future problems finding enough.

The graduates will still have to pass a licensing exam in January before they will be fully qualified as practical

nurses.

During their training, the practical nursing students spent time in the classroom learning theory, honed their skills in a laboratory setting then put it all together during clinical placements.

Griffith, 23, was born and raised in Kelowna and graduated from Kelowna Secondary School. For the four years before she enrolled at OC, she worked as a medical office assistant in a medical clinic.

"Just working there actually inspired me to become a nurse, cause I just wanted to be able to do more with people," she said.

Griffith hopes that once she passes her licensing exam, she'll be able to land a job at Kelowna General hospital.

She said she'll look back fondly on her time at OC.

"When you go through a program like this that's intense...and you're pretty much stuck together for 12 months, you get along. It gets pretty personal, it's pretty amazing, the way you kind of bond."

anieoczym@kelownacapnews.com