

# College gives boost to health-care workforce

Special to  
The Okanagan Saturday

Twenty-two practical nursing grads donned cap and gown Friday in Kelowna — another 12 will do the same in Penticton on Monday — sending a total of 34 new nurses into the Okanagan workforce.

Shelby Griffith was the valedictorian at Okanagan College's convocation ceremonies in Kelowna, while Caroline Isaak will do the honours in Penticton.

"I really want to say thank you to the families, friends and classmates of all of the students, because it has been a very intense 12 months and none of us could have done it alone," said Griffith.

"Also topping the list of important people are our instructors — their encouragement and support has meant so much to all of us."

For Griffith and Isaak, completing the practical nursing program was an incredible achievement. Both women entered the program due to a desire to help people.

For Griffith, 23, a career in health care was at the front of her mind when considering her professional career path.

Isaak, a mother in her mid-40s, always wanted to be a nurse, but

other life experiences kept her from acquiring the training she needed.

"I thought about nursing 15 years ago, but once I had children, my life changed," said Isaak.

"The goal never left me. It was always on the backburner, but this year I decided to make it a reality. Completing the program in 12 months was really great for me and for my family."

Isaak has accepted a position with Penticton Regional Hospital, where she will work in the surgical unit. She begins orientation next week, will write a licensing exam in a few weeks and start work in the New Year.

"I love the work," said Isaak.

"It is exactly what I expected and more. I am grateful to be in this profession and feel honoured to have had the opportunity to get to know my classmates and instructors. In my heart and in my mind they are more like family."

Griffith has received several employment offers, but is choosing to hold off on accepting anything until after she has completed her licensing exam. Like Isaak, she wants to work in a hospital where she can use her skills to help patients recover, become well and go



Submitted photo

Shelby Griffith was valedictorian Friday as 22 practical nursing students graduated from the practical nursing program at Okanagan College in Kelowna. Another 12 will graduate from the Penticton campus on Monday.

home to live healthy lives.

"Completing this program has been intense," said Griffith.

"At times, it was overwhelming because there is so much to learn. I tried to take it one week at a time

and focus on that. My clinical experience at KGH was amazing and very practical. It definitely solidified my desire to work in a hospital, which I plan to do in the near future."