

SWOSU Sayre Medical Laboratory Technician Program is a Family Tradition

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Four Southwestern Oklahoma State University-Sayre Medical Laboratory Technician students are following in family members' educational and professional footsteps.

Current students Magaly Bieri, Jimi Terry, Shannon Rhodes and Kenzi Haigler have relatives who graduated from the same program.

Bieri's sister, Heidi, and Terry's sister, Liz, are both staff technicians at Great Plains Regional Medical Center in Elk City. Haigler's mother, Launa, is the laboratory manager at Mercy Hospital in Watonga, and Rhodes' twin sister, Kelly, works for Launa Haigler as a staff technician.

SWOSU-Sayre Medical Laboratory Technician Program Director and Instructor Roxann Clifton believes this speaks volumes about the level of satisfaction with the program and the profession.

"These graduates are so happy with their educational and career choices that they have encouraged their relatives to make the same choice," Clifton said.

Clifton said that having multiple members of the same family go through her program isn't unusual. In fact, she has even taught multiple generations of the same family. The mother of one of last year's program graduates had graduated from the SWOSU-Sayre program and is still employed in the field.

According to Clifton, the profession is never boring.

With a single blood sample, medical laboratory professionals can answer hundreds of questions for a physician, test for thousands of diseases, discover if someone is carrying a defective gene, or save a life by preparing blood for transfusion.

"We're investigators for the doctors," Clifton said.

The demand for these professionals is high, so the job market is great for graduates.

"Our graduates, like the ones who've steered family members toward the profession, enjoy the work and the satisfaction they get from helping people, and they're able to make a comfortable living," Clifton said. "The profession is exciting. Job demand is high. Pay is good."

It's a good reason why the SWOSU-Sayre Medical Laboratory Technician Program has become a family tradition.