

Testing Up Dramatically at Gateway



“This team is just awesome!”

- James Rowe, LPN



Jocelyn Vaughn, Cristy Anderson, Lakaundria Brown, Julie Hughes, Cathy Thompson, Jim Rowe, and newcomers Valerie Spencer & Adrian Carter.

EIS workers at Gateway tested 230 people this quarter – more than were tested in any quarter during the previous two years. Newly named EIS coordinator James Rowe, LPN credits his coach, Barbara Taylor of Imagine Hope and his boss, mentor, and Director of Nursing Cathy Thompson, RN; in addition to fellow testers Jocelyn Vaughn, LPN; Cristy Anderson, RN; Lakaundria Brown, LPN; Laura Lamb, RN; and Julie Hughes, RN.

Gateway serves 8 counties along the Georgia coast. From Savannah in the north, not far from the South Carolina border, to Brunswick, St. Simons and Cumberland Islands close to the Florida state line in the south, it's a beautiful area. At the same time, says Rowe, “there’s still such stigma around HIV that people are terrified of the test. So we make it routine – a normal part of the care we provide to all our clients.”

Rowe also uses HIV prevention education as a springboard to testing. He likes to begin by asking the group what they know – and how they feel – about HIV. Getting more voices in the room not only engages clients, it provides an opportunity to dispel myths. “Old stereotypes and misconceptions persist. That’s why education is so powerful. Clients need to understand that HIV does not discriminate. Old, young, black, white, gay, straight. . . it doesn’t discriminate.” As he wraps up, Jim introduces INSTI, the one-minute HIV test. “We talk about how easy it is and I offer free testing. I do a quick review of the facts and ask if anyone’s interested. I normally give out goodie bags to everyone who tests to make it fun.”

Formerly a nurse on the Gateway crisis unit, Jim is enjoying his new role, “I learn every day. And every day is exciting – just seeing how many people we can reach. When I became a nurse, I had no idea it would lead to this. I have always loved nursing, but I had no idea just how proud I could be of what I do every day.” ■