

Vertical Geisinger

Geisinger LifeFlight Nurse Has a Ventures Idea That's Taking Flight

Posted on [December 6, 2006](#); Vertical Magazine Advertisement

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Kevin Grimm, RN, thrives on the intensity of providing life-saving emergency care aboard a Life Flight helicopter based in State College, Pa. “Working in a space that’s about the size of a coat closet forces you to work more efficiently,” explains the 36-year-old flight nurse. “But I’m always thinking about how to make it easier.”

A graduate of Lock Haven University with a degree in management, and Geisinger’s School of Nursing (1995), Grimm set out to combine his interest in aviation and medicine. After gaining several years of experience as an emergency department nurse, Grimm proved a natural fit for Geisinger’s LifeFlight team. His sharp aptitude for looking at traditional processes in an out-of-the box way went with him. “I’m one of those people who is always coming up with ideas,” he explains, “yet I tend not to do anything with them.”

But one day that changed. When infusing a patient in cardiac distress with a drug used to slow down a rapid heart rate, immediately followed by a syringe change to flush the drug, Grimm says an idea came to him.

Returning home that afternoon, this father of two preschoolers and a 12-year-old says he went right to his basement with IV tubing, an infusion bag and glue. In about 30 minutes, he surfaced with a rough prototype that he thought would make the injection and subsequent flush easier to deliver in close quarters.

SUBMITTING THE IDEA

Grimm says he remembered reading about Geisinger Ventures – a group within Geisinger capable of taking viable ideas from concept to patent – and contacted them via e-mail. “I knew if

my idea was accepted, they'd handle all the details and I'd get a third of the profits. For me that was a win-win."

Enter Geisinger Ventures associate director Bryan Allinson, MBA, a 32-year-old business strategist with a keen eye for developing businesses and providing strategic support provides. "As soon as I reviewed Grimm's concept, I knew this one had promise," notes Allinson. "It was a smart, simple improvement of a traditional process."

According to Allinson, Ventures-worthy ideas generally are focused on a better way to use a device, a piece of equipment or a process. Usually the idea leads to improved efficiency and effectiveness. "Sometimes," Allinson says, "it is as simple as moving a knob, utilizing software in a different way, or developing a tool to streamline a process or protocol."

MAKING IT EASY

Within days, Allinson contacted Grimm for more information about the infusion device and started developing a business plan and financial model.

"I think it's cool to have an avenue for ideas within the Geisinger system," notes Grimm. "Without Bryan's help, this would just be another one of my ideas. The beauty of Ventures is that they assume all the upfront costs." Furthermore, if the idea gets sold, one third of the money goes to the employee, a third goes to Geisinger and a third goes to the employee's department.

ENTER BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

In July 2006 Bucknell and Geisinger announced a new grant-funded collaboration that is fueling a number of joint teaching and research projects. These are designed to strengthen biomedical engineering, health care, and the overall region.

In late August, three Bucknell bioengineering students chose to pursue Grimm's Ventures proposal as their senior project. Under the guidance of Bucknell engineering professor James W. Baish, Ph.D, the students are building a patent-ready prototype of his idea.

"Working with Kevin and Bryan on the infusion device has been a terrific educational opportunity for our students," said Baish. "There is nothing quite like working on a real-world problem that has such promise to help people in the near future."

Grimm says he met with the students – Lauren Shafer, Travis Snyder and Rachel Zielinski – in late August and continues to receive weekly updates on their progress via email. "The students are bright and motivated. I wait all week for that e-mail from them," he says. "There's nothing like watching your idea become a reality."

Bucknell University's president also believes that the partnership that is turning Grimm's idea into reality has great promise. "A stronger Bucknell-Geisinger partnership can contribute in many ways to this region and to individual lives, including by helping burgeoning

entrepreneurs,” said Dr. Brian C. Mitchell. “This synergistic research project, and others like it, exemplifies core missions of both institutions: to teach and to serve.”

MORE IDEAS ON THE DRAWING BOARD

Grimm says he has more ideas on the drawing board and hopes to have more accepted as possible Ventures projects. “It’s the best type of gambling – because you have nothing to lose.”