

Nursing program a vital plus

by MARILYN RUIGROK

A brand new nursing program at Malaspina College is a dream come true for two local women.

Jessica Kitchener and Shirley Kemp say they would not be enrolled in college right now if it weren't for the diploma nursing program at Malaspina.

The course started two weeks ago, and two years down the line Kitchener, Kemp and 28 other students will be able to write licensing exams to become Registered Nurses.

Malaspina College has been trying for 15 years to get funding approval from the Ministry of Education to run the program. That approval came this year.

Pat Robinson, coordinator of the new program, says it is part of the overall nursing program at Malaspina that includes courses in Long-Term Care, Licensed Practical Nursing and a Nanny Program.

"Most of the people enrolled in the new nursing program are not straight out of high school," says Robinson.

Many, like Kitchener and Kemp, have several years of work experience behind them and have been raising families at the same time.

Kitchener, 39, has four children at home and juggles her full-time nursing studies at Malaspina.

"I live in Parksville and commute to Nanaimo every day," says Kitchener. "It's a good thing Malaspina offers this course because it would be impossible for me to take it anywhere else. My family is settled here and I just couldn't afford the cost of commuting to Victoria to take the course at Camosun College."

Kitchener's background includes several years in the workforce, including a brief stint as a receptionist. She graduated from Malaspina's long-term care program a few years ago.

"I'm taking this course because I've wanted to get into nursing for many years," she told The Times. "Also, the job possibilities for

RN's are very good. Being a Registered Nurse will give me mobility on where I can live."

Kemp graduated from Malaspina College's Licenced Practical Nursing program in 1964. She nursed for 11 years, and then helped her husband run his own small business before starting her own.

For the last four years she has made stained glass windows and looked after her three children, now 16, 17 and 19.

She's decided that now is the time to get back into nursing.

"It's a lot of work but so far I love it," says Kemp. "I live in Qualicum Beach and, like Jessica, financially it would be impossible for me to take the course anywhere other than Malaspina."

During the next two years the 28 females and two males taking the nursing course will gain firsthand experience in hospitals as part of their practicums.

It will give the students an opportunity to work side by side with health care professionals currently employed in their field.