Hello and welcome to the Valley. Today I am your host, Janet Michael. It is the average community college day. We meet up every month with Guy Curtis or Brandi Boyce last month. The last two months I think Brandi has won the arm wrestling contest and so she has gotten to go to the show with me. The guy, Curtis is back with us today. He is their Director of marketing Guy Curtis. I joked with you because you got to do a show anyway last month wearing a different hat. So it's not like you were completely off the grid for us in the month of February. And so glad that I won that arm wrestling contest against Brandi. So here I am back again on the show. Glad to be on and sharing some great programs that we offer at Little Ridge. Super excited to showcase some of our health care programs. We're well known for many of the fast track and short term programs, as well as other two degree programs that help individuals find meaningful careers in health care within our region. And so I have three special guest today to talk about. Health care programs within Laurel Ridge Community College are a lot larger, I think,

than most people from the outside looking in. Understand and realize. We talk to you a little bit before we started recording for the show about how people tend to think of a nursing program, we hear a lot about the nursing programs, but through our CTE classes and whatnot with our local high schools, but also with Lower Ridge, but it's a lot larger than that. Yes, absolutely. There are so many direct care positions as indirect. For example, the health care setting of a hospital or any kind of office. There's so many ways to support individuals in their health care needs. And so I think that's what today's call is all about, trying to help folks see different avenues. If you're not accepted or potentially getting into a doctor position or a role of a nursing program, there's so many other ways to get involved and help individuals with their health care needs. And so I'm excited today to introduce Scott Vinicky, who's our new health professions dean at Laurel Ridge, as well as doctor P, she's with our physical therapist assistant program and Kate Gooden, our she's our medical lab technology

program leader. So let's start with you, Doctor Van de Kooi, talk to me about dean of Health Professions. What does that mean exactly? Thank you. And I appreciate the opportunity to come on today. So my job as the dean of Health Professions really is to support our faculty. We have some absolutely amazing faculty and honestly, they can't do their job if I don't do mine. So anytime they have a need that is not student facing, because they do everything that's needed with the students to get them to the finish line. My job is all the behind the scenes stuff, so making sure they have the funding that they need for their programs, making sure we even have the programs necessary that the community needs. My job is to go out and listen to the community and say, what do you need as far as employees to make sure we have a cohesive and efficient health care system? So I'll talk to things like the hospital systems, both public private big hospital system, small individual doctors offices, anybody and everybody that has health professions in their employ. My job is to hear from them, find out exactly what

the needs are and then make it happen. So I'll have hospitals that will come to me and say, hey, we are really short on med lab technicians. All right, so then I can go and work with the program lead, and you'll hear momentarily from Professor Gokhan, our what do we have to do to put out more med lab text to meet the needs of our community? So my job is all the behind the scenes stuff. I have got some really amazing faculty that do all the student facing things and are the face of the programs, but hopefully I'll be able to continue to do my job well and make sure the community and the faculty both get what they need. I imagine that a lot of time, your job is mostly like a juggling act, trying to balance those two sides of the coin. It is prior to my role I'm in now, I was teaching faculty. That is a very difficult and demanding job, and I'm realizing with my current role now, it's a lot of meetings, a lot. Kate, let's talk about the Med Lab tech program for a minute, because I alluded to this earlier in our conversation. So many times people think, oh, if I'm going to get into health care, I have to be a

nurse or I have to be a doctor. And that could not be further from the truth. There are hundreds of different types of positions that you can be in health care in, and not actually even be dealing with patients directly. Med lab tech is one of those. Correct? And I'm glad you started there. Just as a background, what is an MLT or a medical laboratory technologist? They are always behind the scenes health care professionals, and they're looking for the presence, the absence and even the extent of a disease as well as monitoring treatment. There's a saying that 75%. Of a patient's diagnosis or more relies on lab testing alone. It's very unlikely that you'll go to the doctor's office or go to the hospital. Whatever your signs and symptoms are, they'll do a little bit more. They'll draw some blood. They'll swab your throat. Something like that. So we're not the ones drawing the blood. We're not the one swabbing the wound or your throat. We're not the ones reporting your condition, but we're the ones performing all of that diagnostic testing to figure out exactly what's wrong with you. I would

imagine that the students that would sign up to take this program are problem solvers at heart. Exactly. It takes an analytical mind, somebody that really likes solving puzzles to come in here and do this. Do they need other skill sets? Do they need to be good at math? Do they need to have a high reading level? I know sometimes people disqualify themselves from a position that they may have an interest in because they think they're not qualified for it. Is that the case for something like a med lab tech? You have to have a very strong background in math. We can teach you a lot of the math skill set, but you have to be comfortable with your math skills before coming into this program. And what does the program look like? It is two years long, four semesters. We have three didactic semesters that are all hybrid in nature, so we try to help out if you're a mother or a father. If you have kids at home, if you're taking care of elderly parents, if you're working full time. So all of our lectures are asynchronous online, and you can do them in the comfort of your own home. Most of our assignments,

quizzes, and tests are all online, and then you only come to campus one day a week for each class for about three hours. And we do the hands on testing. And then we relate that hands on testing to whatever we just covered in lecture. And then they'll very last semester is a 14 week clinical rotation at one of the local hospitals where you're working full time hours with another tack that works at the hospital, and we call it a 14 week job interview, because most of the time our students do graduate with a job offer in hand. Some of our students even start working while they are in clinicals. Wow. Guy Curtis and I talk about that a lot as far as having jobs, sometimes before you're even finished, the coursework that you're doing, and the fact that so many of these programs through lower wage community college are high in demand. So it's a high likelihood that even if that's not your situation, you're going to be employed fairly quickly once you receive your certification or you graduate. Oh, without a doubt. We have 100% placement rate right now saying that every single one of our students that has

graduated from this program has a job before graduation. Wow. So I asked the all important question how much money can somebody make doing this for a living? If you do your research and you look it up, most job data shows that in MLS he makes in the range of 53 to 55,000 a year average pay. But speaking directly to our graduates, because this is such a high demand area, they make anywhere between 28 and 32 an hour. And this depends on the hospital that they work at and the shift they're employed. So this means that they're making anywhere between 58,000 and 66,000 directly out of school. I have one graduate that is making over $34 an hour right now, but that's because he's agreed to work three 12 hour night shifts that are Friday through Sunday at a smaller hospital. So he's kind of taken that shift that nobody wants. But he has a great plan in mind. Is this also a position that could be a stepping stone to something else? Absolutely. You can end up working at a college. So most of the students graduate and they work in a hospital laboratory just gaining that experience. They're called

generalists because they work all of the various departments. They don't have a specialty department. But it's great because we can throw them anywhere we need them. If they decide that they want a specialty or they want to go back to school or something like that. There are all sorts of educational opportunities for them. There are online MLT to MLS degrees, the two year degree to the four year degree they can go on for their masters of MLS. They can get a PhD in it. They can do anything they want with it. But even with just the two year degree, they can go into research, they can go into education. They can do just about anything you want with it. Work at a doctor's office. No weekends, no holidays. But even most of those positions you need to go into with some experience. So we do encourage our graduates to go ahead and take that hospital job, working as a generalist for a little while before taking a different job. Is this one of those programs that has a defined start date? I know sometimes when Curtis and I talk about different programs, they're like rolling start dates. You can start in

the spring or in the fall, or they happen every couple of months. How is this one set up from a calendar perspective? The application for the MLT program is due May 1st, which is right around the corner and everything is online. If you go to Laurel ridge.edu backslash MLT, you can find the application on there. It's very very simple. A little bit of demographic information a very, very short introductory statement and job experience if you have it and then your transcripts. Once we review applications we can accept up to ten students per year. And we start in the fall. So every fall is our start date. Typically, programs like this have information sessions leading up to when that registration deadline is. Do you have one scheduled for this particular program? Yes, we have two coming up April 2nd and April 3rd, April 2nd at 330 and April 3rd at 530 in the afternoon or in the evening. Are they in-person on campus or via zoom? They are via zoom. That makes it even more convenient for a lot of people, actually. And we'll just give a little bit of an overview on what you can expect in the program, how to apply

if you have any questions, if you've looked into it and just have a couple questions, your parents are welcome to join us as well. We encourage parents to join us and ask any questions they may have, and it does qualify for G3 funding. We like G3 funding.

As our guide card as go. Thumbs up on both of those. Yes, G3 funding is an awesome opportunity as well as the Physical Therapist Assistant program with G3 funding $0 potentially for students who are eligible. For example, a family of four makes 124,000 or less would be eligible for that student going forward. So it's a last dollar scholarship, and it's eligible for Virginia residents. As you go through the application process or application to the college, at any rate, exhaust all your funding opportunities, and G3 scholarship is a great one. Let's take a break, Kate. I know you have to bounce because you have another meeting, but thank you for taking some time to chat for a few minutes and give me some background on the lab tech program, I appreciate it. Thank you so much for having me. And if you're

interested, go ahead and check out our website. It's a really great website. We're going to take a quick break. When we come back, we're going to continue our conversation. We're going to talk more about the physical therapy program at Laurel Ridge Community College. Guy Curtis, director of marketing for Laurel Ridge, of course, is sticking with us, as is Doctor Scott Vander Kooi. He is the dean of health professions. We're going to let doctor speak in the next segment as well. So we'll be back and do that in just a couple of minutes. Don't let a cringing DJ ruin your wedding day. Celebrate confidently instead with Summit Events Co, the premier entertainment company in the Shenandoah Valley. Summit events is serving 200 couples a year with five star review DJs, photo booths, 360 booths, live music and more. You can celebrate confidently with Ben Avery, Summit Event's founder and chief party officer, who was just named the top of Virginia Entrepreneur of the year. Don't risk your wedding booking professional at Summit Events Kokum that summit event Qualcomm and on Instagram at Summit Events Co.

Welcome back to the Valley. Today. I am your host, Janet Michael. We are on the zoom today with Guy Curtis, director of marketing for Longridge Community College, to learn details about a few of their health professional programs. In the first segment, we spoke with Professor Kate Gogan, our about the Medical Laboratory Technologist program. Still with us is Doctor Scott Vander Kooi. He is dean of health professions at Laurel Ridge. And doctor P, who is going to give us details about the physical therapy assistant program, doctor van der Kooi. Are there things that students could do now ahead of that fall start date in order to maybe get ready or to prep, instead of maybe waiting until May and then realizing, oh man, I didn't know I needed to do this. Yes, absolutely. So we have advisors that work year round. Students or even potential students that are interested in programs, should try as early as possible to get a meeting with one of those advisors, get on the hook, talk to them and see what their best plan is for moving forward. We offer summer classes, fall classes, spring classes. Sometimes we have

students that want to get into some of these programs starting in the fall, but they may be missing a prerequisite course so they can take a math class or a science class over the summer that would make them eligible. Also, some of these classes are difficult. They're health care professions. We we have to make sure our graduates are ready to enter the field. So these programs are tough sometimes. So being able to knock out your English class without having other classes on your plate as well really is a benefit. So get those opportunities to go talk to an advisor and really just try and knock out some of those general education classes like the math, the computer, or any of those others that your program might require. Get them done in the summer. Doctor Pete, talk to me about your program. Physical therapy assistant. Is that right? Yes. That's correct. My name is Doctor Rekha Parameswaran because my name is rather long. Students call me doctor P. I have a DPT or a doctor in physical therapy degree, and I come with about 27 years of physical therapy background experience. So the

physical therapy assistant program is a two year degree. It's a health sciences program and it spans over four semesters. It is taught in-person. Classes are held 3 to 4 days a week. It's a combination of lecture and labs, and it is a fairly rigorous in-person program. So I agree with Doctor Vander Chui when he says that complete your prerequisites and your core requisites when you can, before the start of the program, so that you can devote all your time to the program when we get there. Physical therapy is another one of those avenues within the health care system that also has a lot of room for growth, or to do different types of things. If you start at this level, doesn't it? Yes, it does. And to give a little bit of a background and to address this question, I graduated as a physical therapist back in the day when it was a bachelor's degree, and since then I have had 28 years of clinical practice that encompasses hospitals, short term rehab, nursing homes, pediatrics in a niche group like 0 to 3 years old called Early Intervention Developmental Disabilities, and Dallas Wound Care,

dry needling, sports, physical therapy. Some of the areas that I worked in include wound care, dry needling, neurodevelopmental techniques. Most of these are areas where physical therapy assistants can work in as well. Other than the dry needling treated ballerinas in the New York City Ballet Company triathletes weekend warriors. So there's just so many avenues where a physical therapy assistant can practice. And another advantage with that is as we go through life and we have different responsibilities, responsibilities of a family, or we have to flex our schedule. Being a physical therapy assistant can really help, because you can change your practice settings to kind of go parallel with your life, rather than be stuck and have to make adjustments in many portions of it. When we were talking with Kate earlier about the med lab tech, and you don't necessarily have to be dealing with patients, but it's not patient facing necessarily. This is actually the opposite of that. You really do kind of have to like people. You have to have a little bit of compassion. There are personality traits, I

think, that come with this particular type of a profession. Absolutely. You nailed it. Some of the qualities that we look for as we even look at students are people should be compassionate, respectful. You should be very eager to learn how you can decrease a patient's ailment and overall, a great human being to interact with. Because most of our time is spent patient facing, having an uplifting, positive personality is a big plus over here. When you're working with these students and they're in a lab setting, are you using I don't know what the proper term is. I was going to say dummies are. Or do you have volunteers or are they working on each other? How does that practical experience come in? I have to tell you something really amusing here. From the first day of my school. In physical therapy school. I'm educated, born and raised in Bombay, India. We had to work with patients hands on from day one, because there weren't enough therapists or enough doctors to go around. Students in the physical therapy assisting program are going to be working on each other. So live patients. We don't do models unless we did a

model yesterday and that was for amputation. When we have to bandage amputees, then we have the models that we bring out that make sense and get bigger update. But everything equipment wise, learning to do electrical stimulation on each everything you're going to be doing it on like people. So you have to be super careful from day one. Safety is a big requirement for us. I bet it makes for a tight knit group when they graduate as well. Yes. So each of our groups have text groups of all my cohorts that are passed. I have phone numbers and video of each other too. They talk to each other years down the line just to help each other out. And yes, by the time they graduate, they are a very tight knit group of friends. What is the registration schedule for someone who may want to apply to this program? So our applications are accepted starting April 15th. That is coming up. So April 15th to May 15th of every odd year. So we accept in Laurel. Laurel which at Laurel we accept one cohort every other year we accept about 12 students in a year. They have a bunch of prerequisites to go through. So we start advising

these students at least six months to a year in advance. So we have a perfectly good bird's eye view of who is going to apply to the program. So there is some prep work that is needed. And then what kind of demand is there for these positions once they complete the program? Just like Kate said, we have a 100% placement rate right now. There is such a dearth of physical therapy assistant. So getting out of this program, I know that wasn't the question, but getting out of this program, students make an average new graduates make an average of 60 to $65,000. That's a full time salary coming out of an associate's program. Well, and it is very diverse. You rattled off a list a second ago of all of the different types of hair that you can provide from sports medicine. You could be some of these trainers that are working with the NFL, or could be dealing with elderly people that are in traumatic injuries, things along those lines. There's a lot of diversity in the type of patients that you can focus on. Absolutely. There is a lot of diversity, and I usually tell my students to go into an acute

care hospital setting first, because they can then see the whole spectrum of disorders before they decide to specialize or super specialize in each. In fact, one of my friends used to be a physical therapist for the green Bay Packers for a long, long time. So sports is a big alluring, but so is everything else. Also, there is when I give you the 60 to 65 K salary, it is just a basic one. If you want to make more money and you want to keep your schedule more flexible than being a contract, PTA, being an on demand PTA, or being a home health care physical therapist, there's a lot of money that does it. Also qualify for G three funding. It does qualify for G three funding. I've had two three students in the past who have had a complete ride through the course, so you come out with very less baggage when you tailor something like that type of a career. With the funding that G three offers, it is literally life changing for a lot of these students. Yes it is, yes it is. And in Luray, where we are right now situated, we see a lot of first generation college goers, and we see a lot of students who are coming from families

that are into construction and not much into healthcare or a formal degree. And we see their eyes light up, not just with the potential, but of how much money they can make, of how they can impact the community around them, and how they can uplift themselves and everybody around them at the same time. Doctor Vander Kooi, that speaks to to just health professions in general. It has grown so much in the last decade or so, and it's going to continue to grow. It's not one of those industries where it's going to cap out, and you're not going to need any more of a particular thing that's going to keep you on your toes, making sure that you're ahead of the game in what new programs you have to make sure are ready and able to come down the pike, that's for sure. If you go and look at nationwide statistics, health care is one of those fields that is projected to continue to grow. And if you narrow it down even smaller to just Virginia, the growth potential is is off the chart. And then if you start looking even into the Shenandoah Valley and all of our area, our entire region is sometimes even double the growth

potential, the expected demand for over the next ten years. So in order to be able to keep up with things like the aging population, the amount of people, I mean, let's face it, we live in an. Absolutely. Gorgeous area of the country. A lot of people want to live here, so it's definitely going to be one of those fields. As far as health professions in general, where you'll always have a job. There will always be a demand for whatever it is you're looking for, and I'm just really glad that I get to be part of it. One of the things that we have our feather in the cap at Laurel Ridge is we don't have just the traditional just graduated from high school students. We're not just 18 to 22 year olds. We have people that were stay at home moms for 30 years, decided to come back and jump into a health care program, and they end up being successful. We have people who worked in retail for 20 years, and now they want to change their life and they want to do something different, something that they find to be more meaningful to them or impactful for their families. So I am so glad to be able to be part of something

that literally changes people's lives. And the demand for it continues to rise, which keeps my job interesting, but also very rewarding. Doctor P touched on this a second ago. With all the different industries that you can take this knowledge and go into, from sports to all of these other things. Kate touched on it as well. People don't often think about what those health care resources are. I read a story recently that Laurel Ridge is partnering with Blue Ridge Hospice. We think hospitals and we think health care provision. A lot of times we think Valley Health or we think about our doctor's office, but there are things like Blue Ridge Hospice, there are other health care organizations out there that people can find jobs in that maybe aren't with your local hospital. That's right. And we like to partner with our future employers because it gives our students the opportunity to see real world experience, to see these patients, to see the industry that they're going to be working with. And as doctor P mentioned, the best way to learn. Yes, we have classroom and controlled environments, but almost

all of our programs, actually, I'm going to say all of our programs have some sort of internship or clinical component requirement of it being able to partner with people like Valley Health, their entire system, as well as Blue Ridge Hospice, several long term care facilities. We really are a community based organization where everyone has to scratch each other's back and buy these agencies and hospitals, allowing our students to come in and work with their full time staff. Now they also get to use them as potential for full time employment after graduation. So the concept of community is huge for us. A very large portion of our graduates stay local, which is why the local industries love our students. Guy Curtis, before we wrap up, can you give me details one more time for that information session that Kate mentioned? Yes. For more information about the Medical Laboratory Technology program, join Kate on April 2nd at 530 or April 3rd at 3:30 p.m. on zoom, and I'm sure she'll be recording as well. So go ahead and sign up so that can get that recording afterwards. And as Scott mentioned earlier too, we

have a plethora of college coaches or their frontline coaches who are helping students for the first time. If you have questions about funding, how to get started, how to apply those career coaches, college coaches can assist you along the way. And of course, if you're a current student at the college, your advisor would be the next person to help you. Those next steps. So getting those gen into the way before you apply to either MLT or the PTA programs are is a great way to kind of get those things rocking and rolling. And of course, to, um, if you're in high school currently and you're working towards completing your high school degree, consider dual enrollment, get some of those courses as core general education courses out of the way before you start your focused program. I do remember back in college myself when I got through those, uh, you know, the English classes and the public speaking classes, all those different fun courses got into the core of my actually sports marketing and management program. I was super excited about it. I was able to focus and do really well. So why not get others done

early or reach out to our coaches or advising teams and we'll help you get your way. Doctor P, thank you for taking some time today to explain the program, I appreciate it. Thank you for the opportunity. Appreciate it. Doctor Vander Kooi, you are doing a magnificent job, so I am excited to see where you take the health professions programs at Laurel Ridge Community College into the future. You may have to come back and give me updates from time to time. Absolutely. We've got lots of health care programs to offer. I'm glad you're able to hear from the two of them today, but to have me on any time, we've got plenty more to tell you about. And Guy Curtis, it's always lovely to have a conversation with you. Thank you for putting all this together today. Yeah. Thanks so much. Uh, we have so many programs that we still have. Not sure yet. Over 70 different degrees in over 40 different Fast-Track programs. Gracious. It's hard to keep up. And so, uh, we hope to have new guests every time. But you're right. Thank you for having us today. And super excited to share more about Laurel Ridge and why

90% of students recommend us. So it's a stat that we don't talk about too much, but anytime. It comes to us. They enjoy themselves and they find their next career opportunity or educational opportunity. And that's why we're one of the best leading institutions in the region, and it's obviously a great place to work. Thanks for having us on. I will be back tomorrow with a brand new episode of The Valley. Today we're going to have a conversation with Judy Rinker. She's going to give us all the details about Rotary's International Affair fundraiser that's coming up. So meet me back here for that just a few minutes after noon.