Record number of male nursing graduates begin careers

After leaving the U.S. Marine Corps, Matt Howard of Plymouth, began searching for an exciting and fast-paced career, something, he said, that would get his adrenaline pumping. He chose nursing. After becoming discouraged by the frequent layoffs and instability in industry Hunter Poore, of Chocowinity, a business major in college, began searching for a well-paying career that offered stability. He chose nursing. James Mabe of Washington earned a bachelor’s degree in economics but found himself increasingly searching for a career that offered more meaning in his life. He chose nursing. Howard, Poore and Mabe are three of eight men to graduate from Beaufort County Community College’s Associate Degree Nursing program earlier this spring – a record number of male graduates for any nursing school class at the college.

While school officials say this number is more of an anomaly than a trend, a sizeable number of men are discovering the rewards of nursing throughout North Carolina.

The percentage of men graduating from bachelor’s degree nursing programs has been fairly steady but has fallen off slightly in associate degree and diploma programs over the last three years, according to the North Carolina Center for Nursing, a state-supported agency charge with nursing workforce planning. Males accounted for about 7 percent of all graduates from registered nursing programs in North Carolina in 2002, the last year for which statistics are available. Of 1,530 graduates of associate degree nursing programs in North Carolina in 2002, 110 were men, according to center statistics. Locally, figures for men in nursing are similar to those statewide. In Beaufort County, for example, of 588 licensed register nurses, 38, or about six percent, were men, according to the North Carolina Board of Nursing.

The recent graduates who were interviewed cited many reasons for choosing a career in nursing: They were disillusioned with their careers in the corporate world; they were looking for reliable jobs after being laid off from manufacturing; they were looking for