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CON ALMA HEALTH FOUNDATION SELECTED FOR NATIONWIDE PROGRAM TO ADDRESS NURSING SHORTAGE

Foundation is one of 27 to tackle the nursing crisis

Local program designed to increase the number of ethnically diverse nurses in New Mexico

CON ALMA HEALTH FOUNDATION, the state's largest health foundation, has recently been selected as one of 11 foundations nationwide to receive funding in the second year of *Partners Investing in Nursing's Future (PIN)*, a national initiative to develop and test solutions to America's nursing shortage.

Led by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Northwest Health Foundation, the program encourages local foundations to act as catalysts in developing grassroots strategies to establish a stable, adequate nursing workforce. The 11 grants being awarded this year represent the involvement of 27 local foundations, and a multitude of other funding sources. These foundations, some for the first time, have forged partnerships in their own communities to apply for this grant, giving increased attention to the nursing shortage in their communities. To help develop solutions and lead efforts within the region, Con Alma Health Foundation, in partnership with the New Mexico Community Foundation and the University of New Mexico Hospitals (UNMH) Nursing Division, has been awarded a two-year grant of \$250,000.

"Not having enough nurses affects the quality of care that patients receive in New Mexico. Con Alma made the decision to commit its resources to nursing issues as a result of one of the key findings in our report, *Closing the Health Disparity Gap in New Mexico: A Roadmap for Grantmaking*," said Dolores E. Roybal, Executive Director, Con Alma Health Foundation. ***"This study revealed that New Mexico has the most significant shortage of health professionals in the nation."***

Over 41% of New Mexico's RNs and 43% of LPNs are over the age 50, which is older than the national average of 46.2 years. This will result in the need for an additional 4,520 RNs and 680 LPNs by 2012 in NM.

"Con Alma's Core Values call on us to collaborate in service of finding solutions," said Roybal. "We are honored to partner with the New Mexico Community Foundation and the UNMH Nursing Division's Community Advisory Committee on Diversity in Nursing to leverage our resources and bring new funding into our state."

Project Diversity is designed to increase the number of ethnically diverse nurses in New Mexico through a highly collaborative, comprehensive recruitment, nurse-student mentoring, & tutoring (math, science, English literacy) initiative targeting 60 youth (middle and high school) Hispanic, Native American, African American, and other students of color. "We are eager to share lessons we learn with the now 21 other PIN communities across the nation," said Judy L. Spinella, Chief Nursing Officer, UNM Hospitals.

Partners Investing in Nursing's Future is now in its second year of a five-year, \$10 million initiative. During the program's first year beginning in the fall of 2006, the 10 initial foundation partners established more than 140 partnerships between nursing organizations and local foundations to address the nursing shortage.

“The stability and quality of our nation’s health care rely heavily on a sufficient supply of appropriately educated and skilled nurses,” said Susan B. Hassmiller, R.N., Ph.D., F.A.A.N., senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “While the nursing shortage is a national issue, community-based interventions are necessary to finding solutions that work in different health care environments. This unique program was designed to bring regional philanthropies together to address the nursing shortage on a community-level, fostering innovations beyond what any one foundation can do alone.”

Across America, patients rely on nurses for personal, quality care delivered in their own communities – which is threatened when there is a nursing shortage. In fact, the nursing shortage has become so severe in some communities that it is affecting patient care and safety, health care costs and patient outcomes. Experts say the causes of the nursing shortage are complex and range from rapid population growth in several states, to an aging nurse workforce to poor working conditions.

“Because all health care is local, solutions need to be tailored to meet the needs of the individual communities these nurses serve,” said Judith Woodruff, J.D., program director of the Northwest Health Foundation and *Partners Investing in Nursing’s Future*. “We are pleased to offer this grant to Con Alma Health Foundation, which is well-qualified to explore solutions for the people of New Mexico. Not only do we believe Con Alma Health Foundation will make significant improvements in New Mexico, but we believe that the other 20 projects can exchange ideas and benefit from the work of Con Alma Health Foundation as well.”

For more information about Con Alma Health Foundation, visit www.conalma.org. Information about *Partners Investing in Nursing’s Future* is available at www.PartnersInNursing.org.

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The mission of Con Alma Health Foundation is to be aware of and respond to the health rights and needs of the culturally and demographically diverse peoples and communities of New Mexico. Con Alma seeks to improve the health status and access to healthcare services and advocates for a health policy that addresses the health needs of all New Mexicans. This year, the Foundation will award more than \$2 million in grants to nonprofit organizations across the state.

Project Diversity executes on the Foundation’s health disparities report, an analysis of the complex issues that promote and threaten the health and access to healthcare for all New Mexicans. Learn about the study’s key findings and recommendations at the foundation’s website www.conalma.org.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. See www.rwjf.org.

Northwest Health Foundation is an independent, charitable foundation committed to advancing, supporting, and promoting the health of the people of Oregon and southwest Washington. We focus on issues of health and health care in our region, seeking concrete solutions to today's health problems while advocating to prevent tomorrow's. As part of our commitment to cultivate a stable, skilled nursing workforce in the region, Northwest Health Foundation invests in collaborative and sustainable solutions to address the nursing shortage, including the development of advocacy and leadership within the nursing community. See www.nwhf.org