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NEW NURSING INNOVATION CENTER TO ADDRESS NURSING SHORTAGE AND IMPROVE PATIENT OUTCOMES

HCF, REACH Foundation Selected for Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant

KANSAS CITY, MO - The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas (HCF) and the REACH Healthcare Foundation have been selected as two of 18 foundations nationwide to receive funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundations' (RWJF) *Partners Investing in Nursing's Future* (PIN) initiative to create a new Bi-State Nursing Workforce Innovation Center.

The Center will be located at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Nursing and will focus on improving the nursing environment in order to retain quality nurses within the community. The Center will be developed and implemented with funds from HCF (\$250,838 cash and \$78,339 in-kind), RWJ (\$250,000), REACH (\$105,000), Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics (\$40,000) and UMKC School of Nursing (\$24,000 in-kind).

"We are excited to be nationally recognized by the RWJF for this project, which is the first of its kind in the country," said Mary McEniry, HCF Program Officer. "Although some states have nursing centers that focus on gathering data, no other group has a bi-state center that serves as a catalyst and regional think tank for innovative ideas and implementation strategies, all focused on improving patient outcomes for the most vulnerable patients."

In its first two years, the Center will:

- Survey local hospitals/clinics to identify work environment issues for improvement
- Create a Clinical Scene Investigator Academy (CSI) to provide education and technical support for selected staff nurses in three inpatient settings within the region
- Conduct a regional conference on nursing workforce innovation

Susan Lacey, PhD, RN and Director of the Nursing Workforce and Systems Analysis at Children's Mercy Hospital will serve as Project Director for the Center. "We believe the Center will serve as a national model for strategic innovation in healthcare transformation. It is truly one of a kind."

Need for such a center was determined after HCF and REACH conducted an environmental scan of regional public schools of nursing and key community health leaders. The scan identified several key issues that converged to create a looming nursing crisis, including:

- Demand that outstrips supply fueled by growing baby boomer population
- Supply that is limited by the ability of nursing schools to accept qualified applicants due to an aging faculty, limitations on number of clinical sites, aging nursing workforce and a large number of nurses who are leaving the field early due to dissatisfaction and burnout

“Many experts have indicated that the demand will outstrip the supply of nurses, but that reflects maintaining the status quo in how nurses practice and how the healthcare systems use the available nursing resources,” said Lacey. “This Center chooses a different approach – one that is far more innovative and forward thinking. We believe we can meet the demands with the available resources if we help to improve the environment in which nurses are working.”

Led by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Northwest Health Foundation, PIN energizes local foundations to act as community catalysts to develop strategies for creating and sustaining a viable nursing workforce. The 10 grants awarded this year represent the involvement of 18 local foundations and diverse other funding sources.

“As the severity of the nursing shortage continues to grow, the stability and quality of our nation’s health care stands at risk,” said Susan B. Hassmiller, R.N., Ph.D., F.A.A.N., senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “It’s not only a national problem, but a local issue that demands community-based interventions and innovative solutions.”

This marks the third year of a five-year, \$10 million commitment by *Partners Investing in Nursing’s Future* which funds partnerships of up to \$250,000 each. During the program’s first two years, 21 foundation partners in 19 states established more than 215 local partnerships between nursing organizations, funders and workforce development boards to address the nursing shortage. HCF and REACH are the first organizations to be funded in Missouri and Kansas. For more information about *Partners Investing in Nursing’s Future*, go to www.PartnersinNursing.org.

“The nursing shortage crisis is an important issue for all of us,” said Brenda Sharpe, President/CEO of the REACH Healthcare Foundation. “We are honored to have convened so many qualified organizations to work together to better the quality of life for those in our community.”

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About Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City

The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City strives to improve access and quality of health for the uninsured and underserved in Kansas City, Missouri, Cass, Jackson and Lafayette counties in Missouri and Allen, Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Since it began grantmaking in 2005, HCF has awarded over \$60 million to agencies addressing health needs in the community. For more information, visit www.healthcare4kc.org.

About REACH Healthcare Foundation

The REACH Healthcare Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization that supports programs and projects that improve access to health care for poor and medically underserved individuals, sharing the same six-county service area with HCF. Since its establishment in 2003, the REACH Foundation has focused its investments in three areas – safety net health services, oral health and mental health. The Foundation has invested \$11.2 million in grants and special initiatives since 2005. For more information, visit www.reachhealth.org.

About Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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.

About Northwest Health Foundation

Founded in 1997, the Northwest Health Foundation is an independent, charitable foundation committed to advancing, supporting, and promoting the health of the people of Oregon and southwest Washington. Embracing its role as the community’s partner for better health, the Foundation achieves its mission primarily through grantmaking and support for advocacy efforts that influence public policy. See www.nwhf.org.