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YOUTH ANSWER TO HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Philadelphia partners hold events to increase awareness of health careers

Philadelphia --- Governor Ed Rendell (D-PA), has mandated the week of November 8-12 Pennsylvania's Health Careers Week to increase awareness of healthcare careers for an industry projecting significant workforce shortages. Both the Life Science Career Alliance and District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund (1199C), have used this week to leverage key partnerships and take this message to the kids. Working with the Philadelphia Academies, the Philadelphia Youth Network, the Community College of Philadelphia and local hospitals, two simultaneous youth fairs were held on November 10, 2004 to promote healthcare career awareness to more than 300 youth in the city.

District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund held its annual youth fair at 100 South Broad Street, the Land Title Building, 10th Floor, and had one morning and one afternoon session. More than 200 10th and 11th grade students from area Health Academy schools attended workshops to deepen their knowledge of career opportunities available. Students heard professionals discuss their on the job experiences and attended workshops that gave them more detail on career fields. Cheryl Feldman, Director of District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund saw the event as having two outcomes: increasing awareness of opportunities, and also increasing diversity in a field that serves many diverse communities. Feldman said "The demand for qualified professionals in the healthcare industry is extremely high and is forecasted to continue at high levels. In particular, there is a need for increased diversity in the healthcare workforce. Less than 4% of the registered nurses in Pennsylvania are African American, and fewer than one percent are Hispanic. By exposing high school students to the wonderful career opportunities in healthcare, we can create a more diverse workforce and help to improve services to the diverse population in Philadelphia."

The Life Science Career Alliance (LSCA), a workforce intermediary comprised of leaders from area health systems, educational institutions, workforce agencies, labor unions, and other community-based organizations, coordinated a youth fair at the Community College of Philadelphia in the Winnet Student Life Building, also on November 10, 2004. Working together with members of the Community College of Philadelphia's staff and the Philadelphia Youth Network, the event reached 100 7th and 8th grade students from Philadelphia schools. Students participated in an interactive panel presentation that involved faculty from the Community College of Philadelphia and students from Jefferson's College of Health Professions. The panel was moderated by former 76er and Director of Athletics at Community College of Philadelphia, Ollie Johnson, and gave students a perspective on how and why they should pursue a career in healthcare. After the presentation, students were invited into the Great Hall where a series of hands-on demonstrations were set up, allowing them to get a feel for what they could do in a particular health career. The College's Health and Wellness Center and Chemistry Club and the Temple University Hospital were among the presenters that participated in this event. Joseph Welsh, Executive Director of the LSCA, believes that the youth of Philadelphia can be a long term strategy for solving healthcare workforce issues, especially if they are aware of all the

opportunities. "The youth of Philadelphia represent the future of our city and of our healthcare delivery system. Our community needs our bright and talented young people to better understand the many rewarding career opportunities that healthcare can offer them," Welsh said.

Together, in one day, these two important events reached more than 300 students in Philadelphia. By promoting healthcare career awareness to youth, these city-wide partners have not only evaluated the problem of nursing and allied health shortages, they have developed a long term strategy that will lead to a solution.

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