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OKLAHOMA TO ADDRESS NURSING EDUCATION CAPACITY

All-Country Summit Aims to Spark Innovative Solutions to Oklahoma Nursing Shortage

BALTIMORE, MD – The nation is facing an unprecedented nursing shortage that raises costs and threatens the health care of hundreds of millions of Americans, including nearly 78 million aging baby boomers. By 2012, Oklahoma is expected to have a shortage of more than 3,000 nurses if current trends continue.

While the nursing shortage persists, there is also a dire shortage of nurse faculty according to the most recent survey done by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Only 68 percent of qualified baccalaureate applicants were admitted into programs at local public colleges and universities, while only 43 percent of qualified associate applicants were admitted. In addition, Oklahoma's post secondary nursing education programs reported a shortage of 17 faculty members, with another 37 registered nurse faculty planning to retire within the next five years. With qualified students being turned away from nursing schools every year, the lack of funds to hire enough faculty to teach the number of student applicants has become a challenge.

To help combat the problem locally, the Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Center (OHCWC) continues to obtain funding to address these projected health care shortages. This year, OHCWC's top priority for Oklahoma's 2009 legislative session will be securing funds to increase health care educational pipeline through the introduction of SB 310 by Sen. Susan Paddock. The objective will be to expand the number of qualified faculty to teach nursing and allied health programs, and to support the increased use of innovative education and training methods.

Working on the issue nationally, the Center to Champion Nursing in America, a joint initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration and the U.S. Department of Labor on Feb. 4-5 are holding the 2009 Nursing Education Capacity Summit. The meeting will bring together multi-stakeholder teams from across the U.S., including Oklahoma, to create solutions to the nursing shortage.

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Oklahoma has sent a team to this all-country summit in Baltimore of multi stakeholders including Carole Kenner, DNS, RNC-NIC, FAAN, dean and professor at the University of Oklahoma College of Nursing; Sheryl McLain, MS, executive director of the Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Center; Gayle A. McNish, RN, Ed.D, MS, deputy director for regulatory services of the Oklahoma Board of Nursing; Kammie Monarch, RN, MS, JD, chief nursing officer of the Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Center; and Christine Weigel, RN, BSN, MBA, chief operating officer/CNO of McBride Clinic Orthopedic Hospital, president of the Oklahoma Nurses Association and past president of the Oklahoma Organization of Nurse Executives.

Summit participants will identify and develop approaches to improving nursing education capacity – with the ultimate goal of reversing the growing nursing shortage that could leave Oklahoma and the nation without enough nurses. They will share best practices and focus on four key areas: strategic partnerships and resource alignment; policy and regulation; increasing faculty capacity and diversity; and redesigning educational curricula.

“We know having enough qualified nurses is critical to delivering high quality, cost effective health care, especially as Boomers age and experience more complex health conditions,” said Susan Reinhard, senior vice President of the AARP Public Policy Institute and chief strategist for the Center to Champion Nursing in America. “Like their colleagues, Oklahoma will benefit from the successes of other states that have already implemented programs to reverse this shortage.”

The summit is being held during an important time as America’s leaders are making health care reform a priority. According to a post-election poll commissioned by the Center to Champion Nursing in America, nearly 90 percent of Americans agree that making sure there are enough nurses to monitor patient conditions, coordinate care and educate patients should be a part of the effort to improve the quality of health care. Americans say nurses play an important role in reducing health care costs in the areas of patient safety, preventing medical errors, care coordination and providing primary and preventive care.

“Nurses are a vital part of our health care system and this first-ever all-country summit will prove that by focusing on solutions, rather than simply pointing out the problems, we can make a difference,” said RWJF senior nursing adviser Susan Hassmiller. “This summit will spark innovative ideas for these state teams and produce some of the answers states need to take back with them to reduce the shortage on the state and national level.”

*The **Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Center** is a private non-profit organization dedicated to alleviating Oklahoma’s health care worker shortages. It was created through legislation (SB 1394) in 2006 and is privately incorporated. It operates as a public/private partnership. For more information, go to www.ohcwc.com.*

*The **Center to Champion Nursing in America** is a joint initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A consumer-driven, national force for change, the Center seeks to ensure that this country has the nurses it needs to care for all of us, now and in the future. The Center focuses on two priorities: the nation’s capacity to educate and to retain nurses. For more information, visit www.championnursing.org.*

***AARP** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. The organization produces AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world’s largest-circulation magazine with over 34.5 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP’s 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic*

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community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. Staffed offices are in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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 35 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. For more information, visit <http://www.rwjf.org>.

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