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FOUR EXCELA HEALTH NURSES HONORED AS CAMEOS OF CARING

GREENSBURG, PA., November 5, 2012 ...Excelsa Health salutes four Cameos of Caring recipients honored November 3 during the Awards Gala at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh. The event, created by the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing in 1999, demonstrates excellence in nursing by celebrating exceptional caregivers across several disciplines.

Brenda Toth, RN, BSN
Excelsa Health Home Care and Hospice

A young Brenda Toth witnessed nurses caring for patients while a Candy Striper volunteering at Westmoreland Hospital. With that image of caring nurses in mind, Toth took an anatomy and physiology class in high school, and a teacher approached her about considering a nursing career. "During this class I was able to understand how science integrated with medicine allowing nurses to care for patients." After that class, Toth decided to attend nursing school.

A 1995 graduate of Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, Toth received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Waynesburg University in 2011. She will complete the family nurse practitioner program at Wheeling Jesuit University in Fall 2014.

Toth started her career as a medical surgical nurse first at Mercy Hospital then Westmoreland Hospital. She moved to pediatrics and worked at another facility before returning to Westmoreland as a weekend home care nurse. In this role, Toth experiences "the one-on-one time in which I can educate and develop

personal relationships with my patients.” None is more poignant than Toth’s experience with a critically ill 12-week-old. She remained alongside the family through hospitalization and recovery, and maintains a close relationship with the now healthy little girl who just marked her first birthday.

She also values the home caring she practices in her own life as the mother of two children, one of whom is autistic.

Toth volunteers with the American Red Cross, mentors newly employed nurses, and participates in the evidence based practice council at Excelsa Health.

Angela Ritz, RN
3D Medical Surgical
Excelsa Health Westmoreland Hospital

Night shift charge nurse Angie Ritz used to make her younger siblings act as the patients while she dressed up as a nurse and cared for them. “It’s a privilege to be in the nursing field. Patients and families depend on you to be compassionate, empathetic, supportive and dedicated to them. It is the most rewarding career.”

Ritz graduated from Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus with an associate’s degree in nursing. She spent two years training on a medical surgical unit at Westmoreland Hospital and returned there as an employee following graduation. BSN studies at Penn State Fayette begin in Fall 2012.

Ritz aims to improve the nursing and patient experience by serving on many professional committees including service excellence and quality council.

During her time on the professional image committee, she helped lead her colleagues in embracing the new nursing attire. She readily adopted the new look and others followed her example. She also helped to implement bedside reporting on her unit by training others on its importance to patient care.

“Ultimately, it’s all about the patients. We want them to come back, and we want them to receive great care.”

A volunteer with the American Heart Association, Ritz coordinates fundraisers and community blood pressure checks. “I developed an interest in heart health while caring for patients with heart failure. Then, last April, my

grandmother had a heart attack.” Ritz called the ambulance, and her loved one was rushed to Westmoreland Hospital where she received a cardiac catheterization. “She’s doing great. They saved her life.”

**Patti Lukon, RN
Emergency Department
Excelsa Health Latrobe Hospital**

Patti Lukon originally wanted to be a nun, but she answered another calling, following in the nursing footsteps of her sister and aunt. Lukon joined the obstetrics unit of Latrobe Hospital in 1973 as a Licensed Practical Nurse, having trained at Westmoreland County Community College, where she returned for her associate’s degree, awarded in 1999.

Now an emergency department RN, Lukon marks her 39th year with Excelsa Health.

A seasoned caregiver, Lukon demonstrates her adaptability, learning various computer systems and staying current on the ever-evolving policies and procedures governing health care. But through it all, she’s most gratified to make the people connection. Within her unit co-workers often joke that “if you’re Patti’s patient, you are bathed, fluffed, puffed, and fed.” That same level of caring extends to her elderly friends and neighbors who are frequently the beneficiaries of her home cooked meals and fresh garden produce.

Her years of experience make Lukon a welcome source of wise counsel for coworkers and the students she mentors. She consistently offers a helping hand, even taking down-time to stock rooms and carts or assist patients awaiting treatment.

. Lukon serves as chairperson of the unit base practice council in her department, and. uses her experience and skills to create processes that better the nurses’ workload and patient experience. Pleased to be reminded that adult patients needing her emergent care were once newborns in her arms, Lukon now focuses on older adults. She was recently involved in the creation and

implementation of discharge screening tool for patients age 60-plus to ensure they have someone to help care for them.

Kerri Humes, RN
Emergency Department
Excelsa Health Frick Hospital

Kerri Humes never dreamed of pursuing a nursing career. In fact, she graduated from Waynesburg University in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and political science. "I kind of got wrapped up in the whole CSI thing. Originally I wanted to be a police officer." After graduation, Humes worked as therapeutic staff support and a counselor for a few years before enrolling in nursing school. "My mom was a nurse. She wanted my sister and me to be teachers or nurses, and of course we didn't listen to her at the time. Now my sister is a teacher, and I'm a nurse."

A 2006 diploma graduate of The Washington Hospital School of Nursing, she was hired at Excelsa Frick Hospital shortly thereafter. She plans to continue her nursing education.

Clinical coordinator, Humes strives to make her patients and their families feel comfortable. "I try to relate to their experiences. I think 'what if this was my mother or grandmother? How would I want them to be treated?'"

She also praises her coworkers citing their exceptional teamwork amid challenging circumstances. Humes recalls two unique situations she handled. One involved care of dozens of tour bus passengers who did not speak English who were involved in turnpike accident. A similar situation occurred when out-of-state band students arrived with suspected food poisoning. "It amazes me that this little hospital receives these large amounts of people when something happens and how efficiently we perform in these stressful times."

Humes serves on the spirit, safety committee, and unit based education committees.