

TO MEDIA:
CONTACT PERSON: Robin Jennings
Marketing and Communications
Excelsa Health
724-689-0206 TEL
724-516-4483 CELL

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**EXCELA HEALTH, AREA RESTAURANTS PARTNER TO PROMOTE
MENU ITEMS APPROPRIATE FOR THOSE WITH CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE**

GREENSBURG, PA, May 1, 2013 ...Starting June 2013, diners will notice a familiar icon appearing on restaurant menus throughout Westmoreland County. Nearly 20 popular eateries will be placing the Excelsa Health Heart Center logo next to food items deemed appropriate for those with congestive heart failure (CHF). Each dish has been carefully selected by Excelsa Health registered dietitian Dawn Davoli and adjusted to meet the American Heart Association's guidelines for a heart-smart diet.

"I hope to educate consumers living with heart failure to the fact that they can still eat appropriately when going to a restaurant," said Davoli. "There are choices available to them so that they can still frequent their favorite establishments."

The Dining Out initiative was created to lower hospital readmission rates among patients with CHF. One strategy is to zero in on restaurants.

"Diet plays an important role in the management of heart failure," said Excelsa Chief Medical Officer Carol Fox. "Good disease management means patients with heart failure should be able to enjoy eating in restaurants from time to time. This (initiative) can help to prevent a exacerbation of their condition that would cause them to come back to the hospital."

Many organizations have heart-healthy initiatives. Excelsa Health is taking it one step further.

"A heart-healthy meal would be low in fat, cholesterol and sodium," said Davoli. "What we're stressing with a CHF diet is not just lowering the sodium, but restricting the amount."

The daily recommended intake of sodium is 1,500 to 2,300 mgs of sodium a day. Each Excelsa Health approved meal will have 800 mgs of sodium or less.

Having a menu item clearly labeled as CHF-friendly takes the guess-work out of the diner's experience. There is no estimating or counting calories, grams or milligrams. The healthy option is already identified.

"Patients aren't always aware of hidden sources of sodium in their diet or which foods are high in sodium," said Davoli. "By altering the way something is prepared, or the accompanying sauce or the portion size can lower the sodium content and make the item acceptable for the CHF patient to eat."

Excelsa Health is currently identifying restaurants across the county willing to participate in this initiative. The list of restaurants in the program will be published and posted to the Excelsa Health Web site, excelsahealth.org.

To learn more about the project, or become a CHF-friendly restaurant, call, 724-689-0201.