

**CONTACT PERSON: Robin Jennings**

Director, Communications

Excelsa Health

724-837-1781 TEL

724-515-4483 CELL

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**ELECTRONIC PHOTOS (rjennings@excelsahealth.org)**

**EXCELA HEALTH FOSTERS CAREER EXPLORATION AMONG  
YOUNG STUDENTS; PREPARES FOR THE FUTURE**

**GREENSBURG, PA, July 16, 2010 ...** Excelsa Health has long been committed to nurturing its employees, providing numerous education and skill development opportunities to promote career progression. That commitment extends to the workforce of tomorrow as health system clinical staff guide young students in career exploration.

According to Annette Gold, Excelsa's director of Organizational Development, developing talented professionals begins early when students are in their formative, decision-making years of junior and senior high school and continues once they become a professional.

"We truly prescribe to the philosophy that '*Your Talent is Our Future*' for our employees as well as students. Our goal is to have the best talent available to care for our patients today and tomorrow."

Most recently, Excelsa Health hosted the Health Care Exploration Day July 1 for the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg's QUEST 2010: *Finding Your Future Summer Career Camp*. Students were treated to a behind-the-scenes look at Westmoreland Hospital including the new hyperbaric oxygen therapy for wound care. They also toured physical, occupational and speech therapy, and pharmacy departments. In addition, campers heard from specialists in the fields of athletic training, physician assisting, nursing and respiratory care.

June 21, Excelsa collaborated with Eastern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center and the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board to

present *Health Care Career Camp* for about 20 students from Ligonier, Derry and Latrobe. Students toured the Center for Cardiovascular Medicine at Westmoreland Hospital and learned more about health careers in physical therapy, nursing and imaging.

Earlier in the year (May 18), the health system hosted a similar education day for juniors at Jeannette High School, with participants digging deep into the required education and training for clinical caregivers, special equipment and skills required, salary expectations and opportunities for advancement. They also explored other support careers that may require less formal education. Most importantly the health care professionals shared their own personal experiences and what a “typical day” is like.

“It’s really important to reach kids when they are in their formative years, when they are inquisitive and learning about themselves and the type of career they want to pursue,” said Gold. “If we can reach a student early on and help them with the decision-making the better prepared they are to become medical professionals. Really, it’s all about looking to the future and nurturing tomorrow’s health care professionals.”

Excelsa’s interest in mentoring and educating students early on is also a strategic one. The workforce is aging while demand for workers is increasing. According to a recent report from the Institute of Medicine, the first of the nation’s 78 million baby boomers will reach age 65 in 2011. As they mature, they are likely to encounter a health care workforce that is too small and woefully unprepared to meet their specific health needs.

“This also means that today’s workforce will be transitioning into retirement. They will be leaving the workforce and face their own increased health care needs placing a greater demand on health care resources and professionals,” explained Jody Hirst, director of Excelsa’s Employment Center. “The reality of the baby boomer generation of health care professionals reaching retirement age, in conjunction with the pending increased demand driven by Health Care Reform, dictates that we take every opportunity to promote a bright future by preparing quality talent for tomorrow.”

From a nursing perspective alone, workers are aging and there are fewer students entering the field as the demand is projected to increase. According to the 2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses released in February 2007 by the federal Division of Nursing, the average age of the RN population in March 2004 was 46.8 years of age, up from 45.2 in 2000. The RN population under the age of 30 dropped from 9% of the nursing population in 2000 to 8% in 2004. Compounding the aging factor is the fact that nursing colleges and universities across the country are struggling to expand enrollment levels to meet the rising demand for nursing care.

“Our recruitment team really takes this seriously. We know the students of today are Excelsa Health’s (and the medical field’s) talent pipeline for tomorrow. Through Career Exploration programs, we are able to generate excitement about health care as a profession, while educating students on the broad spectrum of career paths available, and the education requirements necessary to achieve success today and in the future,” added Hirst.

For information about careers and job opportunities at Excelsa Health visit [excelsahealth.org](http://excelsahealth.org) or contact the Recruitment Center at 724-832-4261.