EXCELA HEALTH DEDICATES HEALING GARDEN AT WESTMORELAND CAMPUS

GREENSBURG, PA, June 21, 2016… Excela Health is turning to nature to help improve the health and well-being of patients, visitors and staff, designating areas around its three hospital campuses as healing gardens. Westmoreland Hospital’s green space, made possible by the Westmoreland Hospital Auxiliary, is the first to be formally introduced June 21.

Located just off the hospital’s Ground Floor opposite the Side Street Café, this outdoor room offers a restful environment in which to refresh and renew, away from the patient care areas. The space includes an awning for shade, comfortable seating and live plants presented against a painted backdrop. Similar areas have been identified at the Latrobe and Frick campuses and are under development.

While gardens generally are perceived as beneficial and mood lightening, the term healing garden is most often applied to green spaces in hospitals and other health care facilities that specifically aim to improve health outcomes.

According to Martin Lang, Excela’s Vice President of Patient Experience, a healing garden is one way to demonstrate a welcoming environment. “Hospitalized patients are only here when they are very sick, and this is very stressful to the family,” he explained. “Having a place to go that is away from the sights, sounds and feel of a clinical setting, even just for a little while, can reduce stress, ease anxiety and allow loved ones to return to the nursing unit and again participate in the patient’s care.”

Excela’s healing garden is also restorative to the hospital’s caregivers. “Meeting the needs of patients who are critically ill can be emotionally draining for staff who are often challenged with very stressful life and death circumstances,” added Lang. “The healing garden is a place for caregivers to decompress and refocus so they can return to their responsibilities.”
Making the healing garden a reality has been important for Maureen Cutrell, who is both a critical care nurse and a member of the Westmoreland Hospital Auxiliary, which also has pledged $100,000 to the renovation of the hospital’s sixth floor Intensive Care Unit, scheduled for completion in the Fall of 2017.

“Many studies demonstrate how just a few minutes in a natural setting can improve blood pressure, respiration rate, brain activity as well as mood,” Cutrell said. “This allows caregivers to recuperate and recover our energy quickly for the unknown tasks ahead.”