

NORTHWEST HEALTH FOUNDATION

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**New Grant Paves Way for Bilingual, Bicultural Nurses in the Northwest
Many foreign-born nurses transition out of poverty through WIIN program**

PORTLAND, Ore. — The Northwest Health Foundation (NWHF) announced an award today of \$30,000 to Clackamas Community College to develop a collaborative relationship with the nursing program at Clark College in Vancouver, Washington. The grant will enable more bilingual, bicultural nurses to return to nursing practice in the Pacific Northwest region. The project, which is already a success at Clackamas, is called the Workforce Improvement with International Nurses (WIIN) Program

“We are excited to serve as the first expansion site for this important program,” said Robert K. Knight, Clark College president. “Our nursing program is nationally-recognized for the quality of education that we provide and the positive impact of our graduates on health care in our region. We are facing a long-term nursing shortage with a special need for bilingual nurses. The WIIN program is an important step in meeting that need, and we are proud to be a partner.”

Despite a growing immigrant population, Oregon and Washington both suffer from a shortage of qualified bilingual, bi-cultural nurses. Among these legal immigrants are many health professionals, including those with education comparable to nurses in the United States. According to experts at the Migration Policy Institute, more than a million college-educated legal immigrants living in the United States are unemployed or working in minimum-wage jobs, which keeps them living in poverty. The current economy makes that struggle even harder.

WIIN is designed to prepare registered nurses who have been credentialed in other countries to become licensed, and return to practice in the U.S. WIIN was developed and launched in 2004 with significant funding from the Northwest Health Foundation, and has since graduated 62 highly skilled, motivated and experienced nurses from 27 countries.

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According to Judith Woodruff, Program Director for Health Workforce at the Northwest Health Foundation, "This program has gained local, national and international attention and for good reason. Many of these nurses have overcome tremendous obstacles to be here and they are passionate about nursing. Unfortunately, there are many more on the waitlist!"

Only a dozen or so nurses can be selected each year for the program, and NWHF has worked to identify opportunities for an expansion of WIIN to other community colleges in the region. Woodruff says Northwest Health Foundation would like to see WIIN broaden its scope and increase enrollment to insure greater impact of the successful program. "We know the demand for the program is great and look forward to building a successful program with Clark College," said Joanne Truesdell, president of Clackamas Community College. "It's wonderful that we can build on a program that improves the quality of life for these international nurses and the quality of health care for our communities."

Last year, with support from NWHF, Clackamas Community College began collaborating with Washington State University-Vancouver to provide WIIN students the opportunity to pursue graduate education in order to increase the diversity of the area nursing faculty.

Clark College and WSU have a well-established partnership to offer nursing education opportunities on the WSU-Vancouver campus. In 2006, a dual-enrollment process began, allowing nursing students to complete a bachelor's degree with the same ease as students attending a four-year institution.

"Combining the work of two community colleges and a university across state borders is an important aspect of this collaboration," said Woodruff.

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The mission of the Northwest Health Foundation is to advance, support and promote the health of the people in Oregon and southwest Washington. The Foundation invests in efforts that address the root causes of health through community-driven solutions and seeks to ensure that the voices of all people are represented in health policy discussions. Northwest Health Foundation focuses its work in three areas: public health, health care reform, and health workforce. More information can be found at www.nwhf.org.