

Chicago-based Organization Announces Initiative to Help Ease Severe Nursing Shortage In Illinois

CHICAGO, IL – September 28 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Citing warnings from a report released last week by the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council (MCHC), which revealed that by the year 2020, Illinois would have a shortage of 21,000 registered nurses, the Chicago-based Provident Foundation has announced plans to step up its efforts to help reverse this dangerous trend.

The MCHC report noted that the current nursing shortage began in the late 1990s, as more baby boomers required hospital care and nursing professionals began to reach retirement age. The problem, however, persists because fewer young people are entering this very demanding field. If not dealt with aggressively, experts agree that inadequate staffing of nurses in hospitals could result in substandard patient care and increased risk of medical errors.

“We are committed to being at the forefront of solving this very serious problem,” said Jim Myles, Founder and President of the Provident Foundation. Acknowledging that the issue needs short and long-term solutions, Myles announced upcoming plans to hold quarterly conferences for aspiring nurses and other healthcare workers in an effort to connect them with valuable resources that can move them toward existing opportunities in nursing. The conferences will begin in early 2006.

Myles also reaffirmed the foundation’s commitment to providing scholarships to nursing students throughout the city and state. For the past decade, the foundation has given more than \$42,000 to students pursuing careers in healthcare. “For some students, one thousand dollars can mean the difference between getting a nursing degree or dropping out,” Myles said. Individuals as well as local businesses provide the scholarships.

The foundation’s long-term effort was launched last year when they formed the Future Doctors/Future Nurses Clubs. The program aims to expose students to a variety of health care professions. “If we are serious about preparing young people for the future, we have to connect them with professionals who can encourage them to know that they can be more than athletes and entertainers,” said Myles.

Future Doctors Future Nurses Clubs have been established in four Chicago inner-city schools, including Carver Military Academy, Dunbar High School, Chicago Vocational High School and Hyde Park Career Academy with several other schools strongly considering adding the program to their list of extra curricular activities. “The students have been very enthusiastic about joining the clubs,” said Margo Crawford, an education consultant. “Once they get key information regarding how one prepares to become a healthcare professional and are motivated to have confidence in their abilities, they

can't help but get excited," she added. Crawford touted Hyde Park Career Academy's club membership of more than fifty students and CVS for its involvement in field trips.

"Our goal is to help nurture and identify the next Dr. Daniel Hale Williams because the health of our community depends on it," said Myles.

For more information, contact the Provident Foundation at 773-363-4272 or log on to www.providentfoundation.org.

The Provident Foundation was founded in 1994 to preserve the history of the original Provident Hospital and Training School and to perpetuate the legacy of Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, an African American physician who became the first to perform a delicate heart surgery.

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