

NEWS RELEASE

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Pine Technical College wins \$4.2 million to train healthcare workers

PINE CITY, Minn. – Pine Technical College is poised to set into motion a \$4.2 million grant project recently awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The project, called Health Occupations Providing Economic Stimulus or HOPES, will recruit, train and employ almost 1,200 registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants, home health aides and medical laboratory technologists in east central Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

The fundamental work of HOPES is expanding the capacity for allied health education in nursing and medical laboratory technology programs, according to PTC President Robert Musgrove. Distance learning is integral to every phase of the program. Distance “eliminating” learning equipment (videoconferencing technology) will be placed at six partner sites. Significant enhancements will also be made to the distance learning program run by the East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative (ECMECC), which is affiliated with 13 school districts in east central Minnesota.

According to the DOL, \$225 million in grant awards will be used nationally to train 15,000 people in job skills needed to access careers in health care, IT and other high growth fields. Through existing partnerships with local employers, the recipients of the grants have already identified roughly 10,000 job openings for skilled workers that likely will become available in the next two years in areas like nursing, pharmacy technology and information technology. The grants will fund 55 separate training programs in 30 states to help train people for secure, well-paid health jobs and meet the growing employment demand for health workers.

PTC’s statistics show Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine counties in Minnesota and Burnett and Polk counties in Wisconsin are facing an escalating amount of retirees, a growing demand for health care, fewer workers, an average unemployment rate of over 9 percent and unemployed workers staying on unemployment insurance longer. Pine Technical College responded by gathering partners from area school districts, higher education, healthcare providers and the workforce development center system in 2007 to address a regional worker shortage. Initially the group – dubbed the Healthcare Alliance – consisted of 12 partners. Nearly

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three years later and more than two dozen partners strong, the assembly has “built a vision for a strong, qualified workforce with opportunities for professional growth,” according to Musgrove.

“Our partners came together with a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and commitment for growing our region’s healthcare workforce,” said Alliance Coordinator Stefanie Schroeder. “We’re proud to lead this partnership in bringing valuable resources to our community.”

The HOPES grant will provide:

- \$270,000 awarded in scholarships over three years
- A web-enabled game developed with dynamic graphics and situational experiences to build competencies and engage students in Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) courses
- K-12 healthcare education and outreach activities.
- Delivery of a medical laboratory technician degree to students in the region through a partnership between PTC and Lake Superior College
- Opportunities for assistance with childcare, transportation, and other barriers students may face
- Partners with a professional development inventory through the Training Consortium
- Continuing education delivered in real-time via ITV as well as archived training for the future
- Participating healthcare providers with training aimed at identifying waste in health care processes and developing problem solving skills, reducing errors, creating a safe working environment and improving care collaboratively
- New classroom technology: Two SimMan 3Gs computerized simulation manikins, two regular SimMan manikins and one SimBaby manikin – all of which will be available to students and healthcare facilities for life-like training activities.

Pine Technical College is no stranger to leading, according to Musgrove. The Minnesota State Colleges and University System named Pine Technical College a *Center of Excellence* partner for its innovative programming. Additionally, just one year ago, Pine Technical College was awarded \$1.9 million from the Department of Labor to provide advanced manufacturing training to students, industry partners and high school students across the region. It has already made an impact invigorating the manufacturing industry with a workforce of well-trained individuals, and the HOPES grant will do the same for healthcare.

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