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Secretary Gassman Announces \$88,393 Industry Partnership Training Grant to Support Coulee Region Health Care Sector

Local matching resources bring total investment to over \$176,000

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$88,393 Wisconsin Industry Partnership grant to provide long-term health care training to as many as 150 workers in the La Crosse region, the latest award in Governor Doyle's \$6 million worker training initiative.

"This training grant continues Governor Doyle's commitment to strengthen industry partnerships, build job skills, and grow the region's economy," Secretary Gassman said. "The grant will serve the health care industry, the region's leading sector. Workers in long-term care will receive training to improve their skills and the quality of care. It's a win for the workers, employers and the region."

Awarded to Workforce Connections, Inc., the \$88,393 grant will be matched by regional partners to provide \$176,786 for the health care sector training project. The collaborative effort includes two major groups, the La Crosse Medical Health Science consortium and the Coulee Region Long Term Care Coalition.

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and Western Technical College (WTC) will provide career ladder training to direct care workers and leadership training to supervisors. UW-La Crosse training will include opportunities for certified nursing assistants (CNAs) to receive certificates in gerontology. WTC training will include opportunities for CNAs to earn certificates in dispensing medication, as well as learn skills in electronic medical record keeping.

Health care is the region's major sector, employing nearly one in five workers. Of 134,850 jobs last year in the eight-county Grow Region, 24,809 were health care and social assistance jobs. The sector saw job growth of 2.5 percent last year, while jobs declined overall in the region. Of the health care workers, more than 5,100 are employed in nursing and residential care facilities. Of the 24,809 workers, those involved in patient care are paid an average wage of \$27.20 per hour. The average wage for health care support workers is approximately half that amount.

Governor Doyle launched the Industry Partnership program in 2009 with nearly \$3 million. This summer, he announced another \$3 million for the program, which represents an innovative approach to training that involves area employers, labor unions, workforce development agencies, economic development agencies, technical colleges, K-12 schools, and University of Wisconsin institutions.