

## **For Immediate Release**

### **Aetna Foundation Awards \$25,000 to Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center**

**A \$25,000 grant will help implement an innovative new Pharmacy model for diabetes patients in Hillsboro.**

Hillsboro, OR (October 21, 2008) - In Washington County, 5% of the population suffers from diabetes. Diabetes is a serious condition that must be carefully monitored and treated, usually through costly laboratory tests and prescription medications. For those without insurance, or for those with language, socioeconomic and cultural barriers to healthcare access, staying healthy and living with diabetes can be extremely challenging.

The Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center (Virginia Garcia) clinics in Washington and Yamhill counties provide high quality healthcare for 30,000 patients annually – including almost 2,000 patients with diabetes. Effectively treating this disease requires coordinated efforts between patients, providers and pharmacists. Now, thanks to a generous grant of \$25,000 from the Aetna Foundation, Virginia Garcia's Hillsboro Clinic will implement an innovative pharmacy model to boost positive health outcomes for diabetes patients while decreasing overall healthcare costs.

In addition to having a pharmacist within the Hillsboro clinic pharmacy, this grant will help fund an additional pharmacist who will have an office within the clinic to work closely with providers and patients. Providers will refer their diabetic patients to the clinical pharmacist who will work with each patient in private to determine if they are taking their medications properly, to ensure that there are no potential contraindications among all prescriptions being taken and to educate them.

This venture is based upon an Asheville North Carolina project which began in 1996 as a payer-driven and patient-centered model to empower patients to control their chronic diseases, reduce health risks, and ultimately lower healthcare costs. "Virginia Garcia is in a perfect position to implement this creative model of care for our diabetic patient population," says Diana Walker, executive director of the Virginia Garcia Memorial Foundation. "With 45% of our patients uninsured and almost 70% living below the poverty level, this project will help to transform the lives of our diabetic patients, while also reducing their expenses. The Aetna Foundation's investment is a testament to their interest in helping to build healthier communities and to improving the quality of life for patients."

Virginia Garcia will also work in close collaboration with Pacific University, a longtime partner of the organization in the planning and implementation of pharmacy services at the Hillsboro Clinic. “The synergy between the School of Pharmacy and the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center will result in a highly successful program and it will be a tremendous benefit to the community,” said Andrew B. Oliveira, MD, MHA medical director of Aetna in the Northwest.

### **About the Aetna Foundation**

The Aetna Foundation is the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc. Founded in 1972, the Foundation seeks to help build healthy communities by funding initiatives that improve the quality of life where our employees and customers work and live.

The Foundation’s giving is focused on health, diversity and employee community involvement, with broader programs in our home state of Connecticut. Since 1980, the Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed over \$334 million in grants, sponsorships and social investments. In 2007, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation contributed \$24.5 million nationally.

Additional information about the Aetna Foundation is available at [www.aetna.com/foundation](http://www.aetna.com/foundation).

### **About Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center**

In 1975, Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center was founded in memory of six-year-old Virginia Garcia. While accompanying her farmworker parents to Oregon to pick strawberries, Virginia developed blood poisoning from a simple foot wound. Although attempts were made to treat her, the unavailability of appropriate cultural and lingual medical services ultimately resulted in her preventable death. Stunned by this tragedy, community leaders joined forces in an unprecedented effort to ensure that such a tragedy would never be repeated.

Today, Virginia Garcia is the only Federally Qualified Health Center in Washington and Yamhill Counties. Virginia Garcia serves 30,000 community members with barriers to healthcare per year with 280 staff members in four medical clinics, three dental clinics, a school-based healthcare and a mobile van.

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