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## Secretary Gassman Highlights Training Success at Ashland Memorial Medical Center

### *On Governor's behalf, Labor Secretary honors CEP, Inc., on 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

ASHLAND – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today highlighted the success of three individuals starting new careers as health care workers at Ashland Memorial Medical Center and honored DWD's job training partner, Northwest CEP, Inc., for helping workers and employers in its 40 years of service to the area.

"Under Governor Doyle's leadership, we are working to grow the economy and create job opportunities," Secretary Gassman said. "Northwest CEP, Inc., has been a strong partner in that effort, providing excellent service to workers, those who want to work, and employers, such as Ashland Memorial Medical Center."

On behalf of Governor Doyle, Secretary Gassman presented Steve Terry, Executive Director of Northwest CEP, Inc., a commendation congratulating the organization on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Affiliated with the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board, CEP serves 180,000 people in the ten county region.

"For 40 years, we have served literally tens of thousands of people, providing them training and helping them find employment," Terry said. "We do it for the economic well being of the area. That's why we're in workforce development, to help area businesses and workers."

While at Ashland Memorial Medical Center (MMC), Secretary Gassman met three individuals who changed course as adults and began new careers in health care with employment and training services that DWD funded and CEP provided. The three individuals are:

- Dennis (Denny) Kontny, a dislocated worker who worked at Fort James Corporation until the paper mill closed in 1998. He enrolled in the dislocated worker program, entered Lake Superior College in Duluth and earned a two-year degree in respiratory therapy. Upon his graduation in 2002, MMC hired him as a respiratory therapist.
- JoAnne Koosmann decided to return to college, earning a two-year degree as a radiology technologist. She was hired immediately by the Eagle River hospital and has since pursued her mammography certification. She now is employed at MMC as a mammography technologist.
- Gerald (Jerry) Seitz, once a self-employed carpenter, entered a training program at MMC and today is an Alcohol and Drug Counselor in MMC's Behavioral Health Department.

“It really has been a win-win for us,” MMC President Daniel J. Hymans said. “The individual gets a stable, good paying job in the area where they want to live, and MMC gets good employees who are invested in our organization and our community. This is especially helpful in the fields of radiology and respiratory therapy where there are national shortages of trained staff.”

At the hospital, Secretary Gassman also met health care workers who benefited from one of Governor Doyle’s Grow Wisconsin workforce training programs, the Wisconsin Safe-Lifting Initiative. A grant of \$20,000 was awarded to a Northwest CEP Healthcare Workforce Consortium, which included MMC and two other hospitals. The consortium added nearly \$30,000 in matching funds for training to help workers avoid back injuries by using safe lifting techniques and equipment.

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top ten occupations at highest risk for back injuries are in health care. Eighteen grants totaling \$325,000 were awarded in 2006. At MMC, 221 patient care providers received training.

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