

## **NWACC Foundation purchasing NARTI, Highlands Oncology facilities**

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BENTONVILLE (Wednesday, April 18, 2007) – The NorthWest Arkansas Community College Foundation Monday, April 9, signed an offer and acceptance to acquire the NARTI and Highlands Oncology facilities in Bentonville.

The Foundation will purchase the two facilities that are connected by a walkway for \$3,169,400; it paid \$100,000 earnest money at the signing. The facilities are located adjacent to NWACC's Student Center to the west.

Renovation costs are anticipated at between \$800,000 and \$1.5 million.

The purchase of the buildings at 1200 SE Eagle Way and renovation costs are part of the Foundation's current \$16 million capital campaign.

The facility totals 15,800-square feet. NARTI leases 8,999 square feet to Highlands Oncology.

"NWACC became aware last fall of the opportunity to acquire the NARTI and Highlands Oncology buildings," NWACC Foundation President David Thrasher said. "Representatives from NWACC's nursing department indicate the floor plan is very conducive to the needs of the nursing program.

"The utilization of these buildings for NWACC's nursing center, rather than constructing a new facility, provides a great cost savings to the College."

The NARTI building (6,803 square feet) will become the administrative and faculty offices for the nursing program. The Highlands Oncology building will serve as nursing classrooms and labs.

NARTI and Highlands Oncology are both constructing new facilities in Benton County and will not vacate their current buildings for approximately two years. At that time, NWACC will begin renovating the facilities.

NWACC's Nursing Program is located in Burns Hall. Space in Burns Hall, as well as other College buildings, is being fully utilized with no room for growth. Vacated nursing space will be converted into general classrooms.

NWACC provides the sole Associate Degree Nursing Program in the area.

"Our program has produced excellent results," College President Dr. Becky Paneitz said. "Student attrition rates are less than 6 percent annually, and students have

averaged over 90 percent first-time pass rates on the NCLEX board exam for the past nine years.

“The program has one of the highest RN pass rates of nursing programs within the state and nation.”

NWACC partners with area high schools, the University of Arkansas, the northwest Arkansas Nursing Consortium, and area hospitals to create a seamless nursing curriculum and increased training opportunities in northwest Arkansas, she said.

NWACC announced in the fall of 2005 an award from the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration of a \$1.89 million grant to expand the nursing program. The largest investment by a federal agency in nursing education in northwest Arkansas, Project “Bienestar” (Spanish for “well-being”) is a northwest Arkansas regional health care initiative designed to

- jump start nursing apprenticeship programs in area high schools,
- create an expanded Patient Care Assistant (PCA) program targeting Hispanic and bilingual students, and
- produce a 75% increase in NWACC’s capacity to produce two-year nursing graduates from 40 to 70 per year.

NWACC will also initiate, in Fall 2007, a pilot project for a partnering between Northwest Technical Institute’s LPN program and NWACC’s Associate Degree Program to help expedite the placement of nurses into the workplace. Details will be announced Thursday at Northwest Technical Institute in Springdale.

“The three-year President’s Community-Based Job Training Grant underwrites the operational expenses of the expanded program, but does not allow for expanded facilities which are vital to the program’s success,” Dr. Paneitz said.

Thrasher signed the agreement with Brian Holt and Kathy Parker. Holt is President and CEO of Northwest Arkansas Radiation Therapy Institute (NARTI). Parker is Administrator of Highlands Oncology Group, P.A.

NARTI is a nonprofit, community-owned, freestanding provider of radiation therapy services to the residents of Northwest Arkansas and surrounding areas. It provides high-quality, state-of-the-art radiation therapy.

The physicians and staff of Highlands Oncology Group providing specialized, comprehensive and caring services to the cancer patients of Northwest Arkansas and its surrounding communities.