FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 6, 2010
CONTACT: Beth Phillips, beth.phillips@ttuhsc.edu
(806) 743-2143

TTUHSC School of Nursing, Sears Methodist Retirement System, Inc., Receive Grant to Bolster Texas’ Certified Nursing Assistant Workforce

About 20 percent of U.S. citizens will be 65 years and older by 2030, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Currently, more than 80 percent of adults over the age of 65 live with at least one chronic health condition.

The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) School of Nursing at Abilene and Sears Methodist Retirement System, Inc., have received a $750,000 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services Administration to establish a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training Program. The program will alleviate the growing burden that chronic health care conditions of the elderly will have on personal care services. The program also aims to reduce CNA turnover rates.

The exemplary 75-hour CNA program, based on the Texas Curriculum for Nurse Aides in Long Term Care Facilities, will include a two-week CNA training and a four-month continuing education career ladder component created to enrich the CNA professional with in-depth experiences designed to increase CNA leadership qualities, skill levels and critical thinking, said Pearl Merritt, Ed.D., R.N., regional dean of the TTUHSC School of Nursing at Abilene.

“The overarching goal of the program is to prepare more CNAs for the workforce to care for our senior population and hopefully this will be a step for advancement into higher levels of nursing.” Merritt said. “The partnership between Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center and Sears Methodist Retirement Systems will hopefully serve as a national model that can be replicated.”

Students will be recruited from rural and diverse West Texas communities for the purpose of preparing them to care for the medically underserved geriatric population. Sears Methodist has three long-term care communities in Abilene that will be sites for the didactic and clinical portion of the program’s curriculum. Classes will begin in November and will be conducted monthly. The goal is to graduate 250 to 300 CNAs in the next three years.

“We have a profound commitment to our seniors as the largest not for profit long term care provider in Texas, and we are excited about collaborating with Texas Tech to

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provide a new and innovative model of care to our seniors,” said Keith Perry, president and CEO of Sears Methodist Retirement System, Inc.

For more information about the Certified Nursing Assistant Training Program, visit sears-methodist.com or contact Beth Delz, Carol Gallimore or Shelly Jacques at (325) 692-1533.

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