

For Immediate Release

*Amanda Barney (401) 946-7887 ext. 111
amandab@hari.org*

*Leticia Diaz, GYMR Public Relations
(202) 745-5054, ldiaz@gymr.com*

RHODE ISLANDERS JOIN NATIONAL EFFORT TO ADDRESS NURSING EDUCATION CAPACITY

All-Country Summit Aims to Spark Innovative Solutions to Rhode Island Nursing Shortage

BALTIMORE, MD – Four representatives from Rhode Island have joined stakeholders from across the country to address the nation’s unprecedented nursing shortage. The Center to Champion Nursing in America, a joint initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration and the U.S. Department of Labor today are holding the 2009 Nursing Education Capacity Summit, bringing together multi-stakeholder teams from across the U.S. to create solutions to the nursing shortage. Rhode Island’s team includes: Ruth Ricciarelli, executive director, The Center for Health Professions, HARI; Jean Marie Rocha, MPH, RN, vice president, clinical affairs, HARI; Jane Williams, RN, PhD, dean, Rhode Island College School of Nursing; Kathleen Connell, director, AARP-RI.

Summit participants will identify and develop approaches to improving nursing education capacity – with the ultimate goal of reversing the growing nursing shortage that could leave Rhode Island and the nation without enough nurses. They will share best practices and focus on four key areas: strategic partnerships and resource alignment; policy and regulation; increasing faculty capacity and diversity; and redesigning educational curricula.

In Rhode Island, there were more than 600 vacant registered nurse positions reported during a May-June 2008 Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training survey. These vacancies accounted for nearly 7% of private sector vacancies in the state and 29% within the health care and social assistance sector. While the nursing shortage persists, there is also a dire shortage of nurse faculty in Rhode Island. As a result, qualified students are being turned away from nursing schools every year because of lack of funds to hire enough faculty to teach the number of student applicants. During the last academic year, one-third of nursing school applicants were accepted into programs.

“Nurses are central to our health care delivery system,” said Ruth Ricciarelli, executive director, The Center for Health Professions at HARI. “We must work together to find and implement solutions that will ensure we have appropriately trained health care professionals to meet the health care needs of Rhode Islanders.”

“We know having enough qualified nurses is critical to delivering high quality, cost effective health care, especially as Boomers age and experience more complex health conditions,” said Susan Reinhard, Senior Vice President of the AARP Public Policy Institute and Chief Strategist for the Center to Champion Nursing in America. “Like their colleagues, Rhode Island will benefit from the successes of other states that have already implemented programs to reverse this shortage.”

The Center for Health Professions was launched in 2007 to promote quality healthcare for individuals who live, work and seek care in Rhode Island by advancing workforce development initiatives designed to grow and enhance the state's professional healthcare workforce.

*Founded over a half century ago, the **Hospital Association of Rhode Island** is a statewide trade organization that assists member hospitals in effectively meeting the health care needs of Rhode Island, through advocacy, representation, education and services. HARI members work collaboratively to improve the quality of care delivered and address issues threatening access to health care including increasing health costs, workforce shortages and decreasing reimbursement. HARI members work together to ensure that all Rhode Islanders will receive comprehensive, high quality health care.*

*The **Center to Champion Nursing in America** is a joint initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A consumer-driven, national force for change, the Center seeks to ensure that this country has the nurses it needs to care for all of us, now and in the future. The Center focuses on two priorities: the nation's capacity to educate and to retain nurses. For more information, visit www.championnursing.org.*

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 34.5 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*The **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** focuses on the pressing health and health-care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit <http://www.rwjf.org>.*

###