



**NEWS RELEASE – July 28, 2011**

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**Thirteen Idaho Refugees to Complete Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Program**

Nampa, ID – The College of Western Idaho (CWI) and the Idaho Office for Refugees recently combined efforts to offer refugees medical training to support their goals of self-sufficiency. Thirteen students will complete the 11-week course this Friday in preparation for starting clinicals (medical internships) with local nursing facilities.

This group of refugees has faced tremendous obstacles, including language challenges, hindering their quest to find employment. CWI's English as a Second Language (ESL) program provides support to citizens and immigrants who wish to learn English. Many of the people going through the ESL program want to continue their education at CWI in various fields, including medical, but have found it can take years to get a strong-enough foundation in English to succeed in these classes. According to the Department of Labor, nursing and residential care facilities will see an estimated 41.5 percent growth from 2006-2016.

This is the first time a CNA class has been created specifically for refugees in Idaho. Students in the class are from Bhutan, Togo, Congo, Uzbekistan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Iraq (and one non-refugee from Albania). Through the support of the Idaho Office for Refugees and CWI's ESL program, refugees interested in careers within the medical profession were invited to an orientation where they completed listening and reading tests. Those who passed an English reading proficiency level were admitted into the class. Beverly Miguel, an ESL teacher, joined Pam Hodges, CWI's CNA instructor, to provide tutoring assistance throughout the class. The combined efforts of the CWI staff, local refugee resettlement agencies, and the Idaho Office for Refugees, coupled with the extensive effort on behalf of the students, have led to successful completion of the course work.

"The personal need for refugees to regain self-sufficiency and attain economic stability for themselves and their families makes the Certified Nurse Assistant program at the College of Western Idaho a great avenue for refugees to gain skills and certifications that apply directly to employment," stated Jan Reeves, Director at Idaho Office for Refugees. "Not only do we have refugees who worked in the medical field and as caretakers in their home country, but often the cultures refugees come from have a deep respect and consideration for the elderly and sick that make them excellent workers in the health care field."

Some of the students in the multicultural class have previous experience in the medical field; one nurse, a physician assistant, and a medical technologist. A couple of refugees who completed the CNA training earlier have come back to the class to assist and support the current students. Students complete a total of 22 classes or 88 hours of didactic. The class work coupled with the clinical training at local nursing facilities provides students the information they need to pass the State certification tests to become Certified Nurse Assistants.

“We may be from different parts of the world, but we have been able to come together to learn, to share the ‘art of caring’ – that is the same in all languages,” noted Pam Hodges, CWI Certified Nursing Assistant instructor. “I would trust any of these students to take care of me and most importantly, I would trust them with my family. The impressions these students have made on our hearts will be felt and remembered for a lifetime.”

**Hands-on lab activities will be held this Friday, July 29, 2011 at 3:00 p.m. in the training room located at 2323 South Vista Avenue, Boise. Media is invited to attend the session where instructors and students who are attending and have completed the program will be available for interviews.**

**Students available for interview:**

Alem Lingerh: Alem was born in Eritrea and fled when she was a young girl. She arrived in the U.S. in the summer of 2009. Alem is a mother of two and currently works at Walmart. She loves caring for the elderly and sick and is looking forward to working in the medical field.

Hari Adhikari: Hari was born in Bhutan and grew up in a refugee camp in Nepal. Hari’s mother is disabled and he has cared for her his entire life. He is interested in obtaining CNA training to gain more skills to care for his mother and others.

Jeanne d’Arc Muyengeza: Completed a previous CNA class and is finishing her clinicals. She volunteers her time to support current students in the classroom.

For more information on CWI’s ESL and CNA programs please visit us on the Web at [www.cwidaho.cc](http://www.cwidaho.cc).

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**About the College of Western Idaho**

The College of Western Idaho is a public, open-access, and comprehensive community college committed to providing affordable access to quality teaching and learning opportunities to the residents of its service area in western Idaho. CWI has seven campus locations throughout Southwest Idaho providing higher education and 21st Century technical skills acquisition. The college is dedicated to improving the community’s economic well-being by responding with highly-educated and productive graduates. The foundation for the area’s only community college was created by a supermajority of voters in Ada and Canyon counties on May 22, 2007. For more information about the college, visit [www.cwidaho.cc](http://www.cwidaho.cc) or call (208) 562-3000.

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**About the Idaho Office for Refugees**

The Idaho Office for Refugees works to promote mutual understanding between refugees and the larger community by sharing information, encouraging social interaction and developing opportunities for refugees to participate in all aspects of community life.

The Idaho Office for Refugees (IOR) has statewide responsibility for the provision of assistance and services to refugees. The IOR is a private sector initiative, replacing the traditional State-administered program for refugee assistance and services. Under agreement with the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, the IOR endeavors to ease the difficult transition refugees experience as they adjust to life in the USA.

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