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SWWDC and nConnect Award Scholarships to Cowlitz students studying STEM

Vancouver, Wash. (Nov. 12, 2013) – The Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) and nConnect have awarded \$1,000 scholarships to local students Rebekah Moreno and Melina Taskey. The money was a grant from the Charitable Lead Trust to be used for scholarships for students pursuing education in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM).

"Supporting young people's education in STEM fields is vitally important to ensure the viability of our local companies," said Jeanne Bennett, Executive Director of the SWWDC. "We're helping prepare their workforce of tomorrow."

Both students completed an internship under the Opportunity Internship Program in the spring of 2012, at the end of their junior year in high school. Moreno was placed with City of Longview Parks and Recreation, helping with an after-school program. Taskey was placed with Oregon Primate Rescue, a nonprofit primate sanctuary in Longview, whose mission is to provide lifetime care to unwanted, orphaned or crippled monkeys that come from private owners or research agencies.

Both students graduated from high school in June 2013 and have started their first year of college at Lower Columbia College. Moreno graduated from Kelso High School and is studying psychology. She hopes to transfer to the University of Washington after obtaining her associate's degree. Taskey, who attended R.A. Long High School, plans to study nursing and works part-time at a daycare center.

"We very much appreciate this generous donation to support these scholarships," said Scott Keeney, nConnect Board Chairman. "Preparing students for careers in fields that focus on science, technology, engineering and math is key to our region's long-term competitiveness and prosperity."

Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, is the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. SWWDC brings together funding, state agencies, local service providers, colleges and community organizations to provide free employment and training services to job seekers, youth and employers. Led by a diverse board of representatives from business, labor, community-based organizations and government agencies, the SWWDC responds to the unique needs of Southwest Washington. For more information, visit www.swwdc.org.

nConnect, a Vancouver-based nonprofit organization, inspires, connects, challenges and supports future leaders and innovators through real-world applications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). nConnect leverages committed STEM professionals to provide the relevance and relationships that motivate students to pursue rigorous STEM courses of study. Learn more at www.nconnect.org.