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Media Contacts:

Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

Kim Gillan-Shafron, Sr. Director of Marketing, Strategy and Customer Experience
Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad
234-759-0094
kshafron@cvsr.com

Taylor Nickel, Communications Manager
Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad
330-249-6193
tnickel@cvsr.com

Cleveland Clinic

Deborah Gordon
Cleveland Clinic Foundation
Senior Director, Government & Community Relations
(216) 448-0109
gordond3@ccf.org

The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad Partners with Cleveland Clinic on Passport to Health Program

The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) and Cleveland Clinic collaborated on a new immersive program called Passport to Health.

A group of nearly 100 high school students from the Cleveland Clinic's Stokes Scholars Internship program participated in Passport to Health over the course of three weeks in July and August.

In June 2016, Cleveland Clinic launched the Stokes Scholars Internship program to give high school students in the Cleveland area the opportunity to learn and work alongside world-renowned caregivers at Cleveland Clinic. The nine-week Louis Stokes Internship Program was formulated to inspire students to embrace a variety of disciplines and to foster skills that will help them become life-long learners.

Deborah Gordon, a trustee of CVSR and senior director of operations, government & community relations for the Cleveland Clinic, worked closely with CVSR, its partners and Akron General Cleveland Clinic to create an opportunity for the Stokes interns to visit and learn about the history of the Cuyahoga Valley area, health and wellness and career opportunities at Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad and Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

"To educate and inspire the teens through this experience required our team to think strategically about what will engage the students and also teach them about the value of the environment surrounding them," said Gordon. "This was not an easy accomplishment, but with the collaboration of the Akron

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General Cleveland Clinic, CVNP, Countryside Conservancy and CVSR – the program provided an experience for some students who did not know the park, railroad or farms existed.”

The Passport to Health program ran on July 20, 22, 27, 29 and August 3. Each day, the interns had the opportunity to take the train and visit various locations within the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Day 1, July 20: Departing the train from Rockside station, the interns met CVSR trainmen, conductors and volunteers. They learned about the wildlife in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and learned about the history of the railroad and Cuyahoga Valley area.

Day 2, July 22: The interns took the train to Fitzwater train yard. They received a behind-the-scenes tour of the facilities and learned about train operations, maintenance and equipment. The interns also received a tour of the interior the renovated St. Lucie Sound car and caboose.

Day 3, July 27: At Countryside Conservancy farms, the students first stopped at Goatfeathers Point Farm where they learned about farming within the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and had the chance to get up close to pigs, goats, chickens and turkeys and learn about sustainable farming. They also visited Greenfield Berry Farm where they learned from a farmer about his career, berry farming and Greenfield’s commitment to organic farming practices.

Day 4, July 29: The interns learned about special programming on the train and participated in a health & fitness-themed Murder Mystery program, interacting with professional actors on board and role-playing as suspects and detectives.

Day 5: August 3: The interns met with Cuyahoga Valley National Park Rangers and learned about career opportunities with the National Park Service. They hiked the towpath trails and visited the Boston Visitor Center. On the train ride back, Sue Hobson, director of regional community outreach, government & community relations of Cleveland Clinic Akron General arranged for a dietician and exercise physiologist to educate the interns on the importance of physical activity and a healthy diet.

At the beginning of the program, Cleveland Clinic distributed notebooks to the interns. The goal was to evaluate what they learned each day throughout the experience and to evaluate the program as a whole.

The results illustrated that the interns gained a better understanding of CVNP, CVSR, volunteer and career opportunities as well as the health benefits of being active in the park.

Prior to the program, over 90% of the interns reported they never knew about the train or the national parks. At the conclusion of the program, over 80% commented on the ways that the CVNP and CVSR use tools such as walking and biking to help people stay healthy.

“We got to know about what the park rangers do. We also learned about the history of the national parks like Yellowstone. It takes a lot of volunteers to make things happen,” said Bailey Patterson, a Stokes intern.

Kim Gillan-Shafron, sr. director of marketing, strategy & customer experience of CVSR said the program was a great opportunity to not only introduce the interns to CVNP and CVSR, but to also expose them to non-traditional careers and the positive impact that volunteers have in non-profit organizations.

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“It was a wonderful experience for our team as we watched these students meet; accountants, teachers, professors, and others who volunteer, while we introduced them to historians, farmers, actors and park rangers,” said Gillan-Shafron.

CVSR’s President & CEO Craig Tallman said that he is pleased to partner with the Cleveland Clinic on this new educational program.

“We at CVSR are excited to become more involved in community outreach efforts and educational opportunities,” said Tallman. “We are grateful for our partnership with the Cleveland Clinic and wish to continue providing students the opportunity to experience Cuyahoga Valley National Park and to learn more about CVSR and its’ partners.”

The Stokes interns attended a Summer Internship Programs Graduation Celebration on Friday, August 5 at the InterContinental Hotel and Conference Center Amphitheater.

About Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) is a private sector, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) volunteer supported organization operating in partnership with Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) and is dedicated to the preservation of passenger rail transportation in Cuyahoga Valley and the historic Ohio & Erie Canalway. CVSR has been providing excursion rail service for 42 years. For more information about the railroad, visit CVSR.com.

About Cleveland Clinic

Cleveland Clinic is a nonprofit multispecialty academic medical center that integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. Located in Cleveland, Ohio, it was founded in 1921 by four renowned physicians with a vision of providing outstanding patient care based upon the principles of cooperation, compassion and innovation. Cleveland Clinic has pioneered many medical breakthroughs, including coronary artery bypass surgery and the first face transplant in the United States. U.S. News & World Report consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation’s best hospitals in its annual “America’s Best Hospitals” survey. Among Cleveland Clinic’s 49,000 employees are more than 3,400 full-time salaried physicians and researchers and 14,000 nurses, representing 120 medical specialties and subspecialties. The Cleveland Clinic health system includes a 165-acre main campus near downtown Cleveland, nine community hospitals, more than 150 northern Ohio outpatient locations – including 18 full-service family health centers and three health and wellness centers – and locations in Weston, Fla.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Toronto, Canada; Abu Dhabi, UAE; and London, England. In 2015, there were 6.6 million outpatient visits, 164,700 hospital admissions and 208,807 surgical cases throughout the Cleveland Clinic health system. Patients came for treatment from every state and 180 countries. Visit us at www.clevelandclinic.org. Follow us at www.twitter.com/ClevelandClinic.

About Cleveland Clinic Akron General

Cleveland Clinic Akron General is a nonprofit healthcare organization that has been improving the health and lives of the people and communities it serves since 1914. Akron General includes: Akron General Medical Center, a 532-bed teaching and research medical center, and Edwin Shaw Rehabilitation, the area’s largest provider of rehabilitation services; Akron General Partners, which includes Partners Physician Group, the Akron General Health & Wellness Centers, Lodi Community Hospital, Community Health Centers and other companies; Akron General Visiting Nurse Service and Affiliates; and Akron General Foundation. For more information about Akron General, visit akrongeneral.org.

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