

eye on philadelphia

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PAMPI – Life Sciences

In a nod to the growing influence and potential of the field of Life Sciences, the Philadelphia Convention and Visitor's Bureau's Greater Philadelphia Life Sciences Congress (GPLSC) has released a new video for meeting planners to show off the city's credentials as a convention destination. The five minute video, narrated by Philadelphian Lauren Hart, cancer survivor, was launched in early October.

The GPLSC is one of three separate divisions of the PCVB along with the Philadelphia Sports Congress and Philadelphia Multicultural Affairs Congress.

The region's prominence in the field was underscored by an oft-quoted study by the Milken Institute in 2009, when Philadelphia and the tri-state area was ranked second behind only Boston – and ahead of such presumed stalwarts as New York City and the Bay Area of Northern California – as a life sciences cluster, using such metrics as employment, research and development capacity, output, work force development and other factors.

In 2007, about 50% of all meetings in the Philadelphia region were Life Sciences related, and some 94,000 people were employed in Life Sciences fields such as pharmaceutical, biomedical science, cell biology, and medical devices. Those companies earned an estimated \$7.7 billion that year.

Philadelphia's sales community now has a specific marketing tool to attract conventions to the city. "There was no comprehensive tool for our sales team to take it on the road," said Bonnie Grant, executive director of the GPLSC. "This will help meeting planners see what we have to offer."

And there are other events, small and large, to continue the dialogue, from the Cup of Joe where practitioners can meet potential investors in University City, to Biotech 2011, the 11th annual conference taking place at the Pennsylvania Convention Center (PCC) October 24th and 25th.

According to Grant, it was the expansion of the PCC, which opened in March, which helped prompt the production and release of the video. "We can obviously attract larger

meetings, and many of those are in the life sciences field," she said recently.

Other major upcoming conventions at the PCC include the Aesthetic Expo, which expects 3,000 attendees in October and the American Association of Nephrology, which expects approximately 12,000 in November.

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But most of the work being done is not what is witnessed by hundreds or thousands of people in public meeting spaces, but in the synergy between Philadelphia area health care providers doing the daily work in the fight against a wide variety of diseases.

For example, a partnership was recently created between

the Wistar Institute and the Christiana Care Health Care System's Helen F. Graham Cancer Center to collaborate on translational cancer research.

And, as the video touts, this all takes place in a region, and a city, that housed the country's first hospital, first teaching hospital and first children's hospital, among others. As the video also notes, some 80% of pharmaceutical companies have headquarters in the region, a statistic unlikely to be lost on meeting planners who have to decide where it's most convenient to send its attendees.