

Foundation Presents Health Agencies with Heart-Felt Thanks

February 17, 2021 – The North Shore Health Care Foundation (NSHCF) proudly presented more than 300 hand-written cards of thanks and gifts of comfort for all health workers in Cook County, at a special presentation today at the North Shore Health Hospital & Care Center and Sawtooth Mountain Clinic medical campus in Grand Marais, MN. This presentation was part of the Foundation’s Heart-Felt Thanks to Health Heroes initiative to celebrate and recognize the extraordinary job these essential workers have done throughout the pandemic in responding to COVID-19 and protecting their communities and organizations.

“Cook County health workers and the Incident Command Team can be exceptionally proud of the tremendous job they have done in managing the COVID-19 response in Cook County,” said Jerry Lilja, President – North Shore Health Care Foundation. “These folks have shown amazing dedication and resiliency working under tough conditions and demands, living in PPE for nearly a year now while performing already tough jobs. The unified response from our health leaders as well as the community at large have proven to be highly successful and the Foundation wanted to demonstrate its gratitude on behalf of the whole community.”

Cook County has maintained some of the lowest case counts of the COVID-19 virus in the state and nation for the duration of the pandemic, has the highest vaccination rate and has zero COVID-related deaths to date.

To observe social distancing requirements, North Shore Health Care Foundation President Jerry Lilja and Executive Director Valerie Marasco Eliassen presented prepared boxes of gifts for each local health organization to the leadership of all local health agencies. Every employee of the North Shore Health Hospital & Care Center, Sawtooth Mountain Clinic network, Grand Portage Health Services, the Cook County Emergency Operations Center & Incident Command Team, as well as employees involved with response from Cook County Public Health & Human Services will each receive a hand-written card of thanks, organic hand lotion and lip balm sourced through the Cook County Whole Foods Coop and a certificate for a complimentary coffee and treat on the Foundation valid at a variety of locations across the county including the Java Moose in Grand Marias, Fika Coffee in Lutsen, Holiday stores in Grand Marais and Tofte and the Grand Portage Trading Post. These partners were pleased to participate to recognize our local health heroes.

“As an organization that advocates for health and emergency services, this is an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and recognize everyone who works in health role,” said Valerie Marasco Eliassen, Executive Director – North Shore Health Care Foundation. “Our frontline workers have been living in PPE for months, showing up each day risking their own health for ours, while managing families and/or other responsibilities and they deserve to be recognized for the outstanding job they have done. We are proud to be able to extend this heart-felt thanks for all they have done for Cook County. Every health worker from physicians and nurses to administration, janitorial and food services has had their jobs turned inside out to manage the pandemic while continuing to provide extraordinary service, this is the least we can do on behalf of our citizens.”

The initiative also includes free postcards for anyone to send a message of thanks to health workers, available at locations across Cook County including the Cook County YMCA, all health facilities and partnering organizations. As well, bright colored banners thanking health workers have been installed at all health facilities and Grand Marais Family Dentistry as a show of support.

Attendance at the presentation to receive recognition on behalf of their employees included:

- Kimber Wraalstad, CEO & Administrator – North Shore Health Hospital & Care Center on behalf of their 146 employees,
- Kate Surbaugh, CEO – Sawtooth Mountain Clinic, 53 employees,
- Jennifer Sorenson, Director – Grand Portage Health Services, 25 employees,
- Grace Grinager – Supervisor Cook County Public Health & Co-Incident Commander Cook County Emergency Operations Center – 32 members and approximately 50 additional EMTs/EMRs,
- and members of the local media.

The North Shore Health Care Foundation proactively identifies opportunities to expand equitable health care and healthy living in Cook County and champions solutions through funding, education, and advocacy. The Foundation has awarded over \$1 million in grants since 1995 and has developed critical programs that address gaps in health services.

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L-R: Grace Grinager, Cook County Public Health, Kate Surbaugh, Sawtooth Mountain Clinic, Jennifer Sorenson, Grand Portage Health Services and Kimber Wraalstad, North Shore Health Hospital & Care Center graciously receive their Heart-Felt Thanks from the North Shore Health Care Foundation.

