

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Regional Rock Stars Walk the Talk of “We’re in this Together”

Illinois entered COVID-19 Phase Four of recovery two weeks ago, and businesses are opening as optimism rises. During these past five months, real acts of extreme kindness and an ongoing sense of community has prevailed. Throughout the west suburban region, we’ve found countless individuals who, in small ways and large, took action to care for others. This week, the final set of Regional Rock stars are, well, actual rock stars and local celebrities whose faces or voices may be familiar to you. And, then there are “rock” stars and, finally, a restaurant owner who continues to rock and roll along.

“The stories we have heard are remarkable,” Suzi Wirtz, IOM, President & CEO of the West Suburban Chamber of Commerce & Industry, says. “At the beginning, the collective group felt we may get a few stories from a few areas. In the end, we had close to 100 nominations across Illinois. Each week, as we discussed the nominations, we were awestruck by the levels of kindness, hope and gratitude. We are grateful for those who took the time to tell the stories so that we could share them and provide inspiration during such a difficult time.”

Jim Peterik, Musician. This singer/songwriter is a true rock star and used that talent to give back to his community. Along with other well-known Chicago musicians, Jim used his voice in tribute to the city's medical workers with the song "Spirit of Chicago." Peterik said although the song references Chicago, he hopes its message resonates all over the world. “Music has been my saving grace all my life. It’s been my life raft and counselor in hard times,” Jim says. “Now more than ever song writing has helped me express the extreme challenges we are all facing.” He believes a community is our support system, with a feeling that we are not alone and “this is more vital to our physical and mental health now more than ever.” Jim said he didn’t decide to help during the pandemic, but rather, “It was a call to arms! It was so obvious to so many of us that we need to prop each other up any way we can with simple kindness, concern and help. We can all do something to make a difference. Rock on. And keep the hope in your heart. We WILL get through this?” says Jim “Jimbo” Peterik. Take a listen to “Spirit of Chicago” on YouTube.

State Representative Emanuel “Chris” Welch, 7th District. Representative Welch is always fighting for families, education and the communities he serves. He uses social media to call attention to critical issues in the region. Specifically during COVID-19, he has led LinkedIn and Facebook conversations to inform the public and introduce them to other leaders. In early May in Hillside, cars lined up outside Krispy Kreme donuts to pick up free masks and donuts. Along with Sharon Preston, founder of the nonprofit Flags of the Heart, Rep Welch distributed 8,000 free face masks. He is a leader for the people and stands among them. “I believe community is all about working together,” he explains. “When we are moving in the same direction, we accomplish great things for us all. Crisis is a time when leaders need to step up even more so. It’s not a time to take a vacation or go on hiatus because that’s typically the time people need their government the most.” He provides an example of this: When thousands of people lost their jobs due to COVID19, his office stepped up and was helpful to those trying to get

through to a flooded IDES system. “I had to personally find ways to pour information into the community on a regular basis, and that’s what we did and what we continue to do,” he says. It is not going unnoticed.

Vulcan Materials Company, McCook, IL. We’ve all heard the words (and used the hashtag) “we’re in this together,” and Vulcan Materials Company is walking the talk. A representative for the McCook employees contacted the West Suburban Chamber asking how they could help; they took up a collection, with Vulcan offering to match it, in order to buy things for health care workers. They were put in touch with AMITA and they worked together from there. “The men and women at Vulcan’s McCook Quarry are a community. And the areas surrounding the quarry is our community,” says Atisthan Roach, manager of community and government Relations at Vulcan. AMITA was so grateful to not just Vulcan, but everyone in the community “for extending compassion to our caregivers who continue to serve the most vulnerable in our communities right now.” Roach says of the McCook location, “Many of the workers also live in the community. By working together and supporting the people and local businesses around us, we will get through this difficult time.”

Kirk DeLise, Bella Banquets/Via Bella/OUVO. Over the years, Kirk and his restaurants have been a constant supporter of local nonprofits, assisting with food, delivery and banquet space on many occasions. During COVID-19, he was approached by an LT hockey-mom friend who wanted to do something special for the residents of Helping Hand Center. With her generosity, Kirk was able to deliver food to the 12 HHC homes every day since the Stay At Home order started. He does the majority of deliveries himself. “This has been the most uplifting experience in my 35 years in the restaurant business,” Kirks says. “To see the residents who have no idea why they can't see their loved ones ... greet me with such enthusiasm. Just Wow!” Most recently, at one home, a resident handed him a homemade card thanking him. He explains, “It brought me to my knees and inspired me even more to never give up.”

The Regional Rock Stars is a collaborative effort by AMITA Health, Community Memorial Foundation, the Hinsdale Chamber of Commerce, West Central Municipal Conference and the West Suburban Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Individuals will be recognized at a community celebration at the end of the year.



AMITA Health (www.AMITAhealth.org) is a joint operating company formed by AdventHealth in Altamonte Springs, Fla., and St. Louis-based Ascension. AMITA Health is the largest health system in Illinois, comprising 19 hospitals and more than 230 sites of care. The health system has 900 providers in its medical groups, more than 26,000 associates and 7,000 physician partners and serves over 6.6 million residents in the greater Chicagoland area.

Community Memorial Foundation (CMF) is a private health conversion foundation established in 1995. The Foundation's grantmaking and community work are guided by its mission - to measurably improve the health of those who live and work in the western suburbs of Chicago. Throughout 25 years of regional investment, CMF has awarded more than \$77 million dollars to nonprofit organizations in the western suburbs of Cook County and southeastern portion of DuPage County. cmfdn.org

Hinsdale Chamber of Commerce has been in operation for more than 90 years by representing the voice of businesses in Hinsdale and beyond and has created a legacy in serving the entire community by Connecting Business through Community-Leadership-Opportunity-Involvement.

The West Central Municipal Conference serves as the Council of Government representing 52 local governments in west suburban Cook and eastern DuPage Counties. Within our mission statement, we seek to serve our members by fostering municipal cooperation and communication; developing solutions on matters of mutual concern; advocating common interests at the county, state, and federal levels of government; and offering training, technical assistance and resource information that contribute to the efficient management of local government. westcook.org

The West Suburban Chamber of Commerce & Industry is the collective voice of the region's business community, advocating pro-business initiatives and public policy on a state and local level. Economic prosperity is driven by promoting the thriving business climate, geographical preference and demographic diversity of the region. We leverage the strength of our membership by encouraging innovation and the exchange of ideas, information and opportunity for the benefit of the entire community. Wscoci.org