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For Immediate Release

### **Simple Acts of Kindness Keep People and Communities Connected**

A worldwide pandemic will be remembered forever, written about in history books and leaves lasting effects. Some of those effects are kindness and gratitude ... and a greater sense of community. A collaborative group of west suburban organizations recognizes everyday people who are making sure good things happen. These are Regional Rock Stars, individuals and organizations who are thoughtfully making change happen. These acts of kindness are helping to inspire hope throughout our communities—and helping to strengthen communities even in the most difficult of times. They help to spread gratitude during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each week, we will share these stories online and to the public.

“These particular stories are about fitness, faith, fun and friendship. But they’re also about hope and helping others,” said Suzi Wirtz, President & CEO of the West Suburban Chamber of Commerce & Industry. “We are all grateful to our Regional Rock Stars for making a difference and supporting your communities.”

**Adam Reyes, King-Bruwaert House.** Adam is the Assistant Director of Building and Grounds in the Maintenance Department and volunteers to help families in need. An active member (and deacon) of Hope Church of La Grange, he is a leader with the church’s Convoy of Hope Response Team and has also been assisting with local disaster relief. He works with team members to collect, sort, pack and distribute groceries to those struggling to make ends meet during the pandemic. The church accepts donations to support the activities that benefit individuals and families. Cash donations also support efforts. From his childhood days, Reyes worked long days on Habitat for Humanity projects with his father and learned the importance of community service. Compassionate and caring. Dedicated and resourceful. Focused and reliable. A role model for so many. Reyes brings all these qualities and more to his commitment serving the community. “I enjoy serving God and this Response Team started as a small group and we have feed now close to 3000 families plus seniors and babies during this pandemic,” Reyes says. “It is a team effort completely. And being kind and helping during these difficult times brings Hope to everyone. The people smile and cry happy tears. Everyone is so thankful the worry leaves their face. It is awesome when they know they will eat and not have to worry.”

**Sandy Squillo, Clarendon Hills Cares.** A jeweler by trade, Sandy does not sew. “But my gut told me that I better pull out that dusty 35 year old sewing machine and figure out how to make a quality mask,” she explains. “When I reached out to the community for help, they pulled together.” Hundreds of volunteers gathered and donated supplies, cut fabric and helped sew. In 8 weeks, over 6,000 masks were completed and donated to those most in need ... first responders, clinics, hospitals, non-profits, senior living centers, nursing homes and shelters. “We sought out and provided hundreds of masks to social service groups that help the disabled in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs,” she goes on. “We were able to raise over \$4,000 by selling some of masks to residents for charity. That money has been donated to various food pantries.” Money is still coming in that will be shared with other pantries. Humbly, she says, “This Rock Star honor belongs to the entire community of Clarendon Hills and other volunteers from surrounding towns. In times of confusion and chaos, many people do not know what to do or how they can help. This much

needed project gave so many people a sense of purpose. What an incredible feeling knowing that our efforts helped in this way. We named our group, Clarendon Hills Cares - Mask Makers. Because we truly do care. And we are still making masks.”

**Karen Trayser, CrossFit Iron Flag.** Karen is leading a daily gym class on her block every day of quarantine. She has four children of her own, and at 2:30 pm every day, neighbors come outside and stand on the curb in front of their own home. Each family is socially distanced far more than the recommended six feet from each other. Karen leads the group that range from 2-16 years old (sometimes parents, too) through a fun and challenging workout. It has created a sense of normalcy in the midst of all of this chaos. Karen incorporates a lot of games in her class and has taught participants the importance of trying their best in athletics and being happy for teammates when they win. “I thought it would be a fun way to keep the kids happy, active, and exercising safely,” Karen says. “During any difficult time, people need to feel loved and cared for. Simple acts of kindness bring them hope because they feel connected. I know I see the world in a brighter light when others help me.”

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. **We invite you to share more stories of the individuals who are making a difference in our community so that we can recognize them and be inspired by the ways they are bringing the entire region together. [Use this simple form to let us know who you know and who deserves to be recognized.](#)**

Individuals will be recognized at a community celebration at the end of the year.



AMITA Health ([www.AMITAhealth.org](http://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](http://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](http://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. [Wssci.org](http://Wssci.org)