



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The FATHER Project Expands into the Walker Community

PARK RAPIDS, MN (March 2, 2017) –CHI St. Joseph's Health Community Health is expanding The FATHER Project and bringing their efforts and accomplishments in working with fathers and families to the walker community. "We are blessed and beyond grateful to be expanding a group site into the Walker area," says Joe Johnson, CHI St. Joseph's Health Community Health FATHER Project Coordinator.

The FATHER Projects Walker group starts in late March and will be held on Wednesdays from 4:30-6:30 at the Faith House in Walker. In order to attend the weekly group, a father needs to schedule an intake and after a face to face interaction he can voluntarily decide to enroll.

"Every community needs a place for fathers to go to grow. As we began our expansion, we received more and more calls and heard more people saying how excited they are for our presence in their community," Johnson says. "As men, we are natural born "fixers", we want to solve problems, to change things, but rarely do we stop to look in the mirror and say we need to work on ourselves, to become the fathers our children need us to be, to become the men our spouses need us to be, and with this program that pause takes place, and the change begins to take shape."

The lead facilitator of the group in Walker will be Matt Zimmerman. Matt is a husband and a father of three daughters. He was hesitant coming into the program because he didn't think it was for him, he thought it was for "dads with problems", but after a friend told him

more about it he joined, and has experienced great growth and change. He's able to communicate better with his daughters, to keep calm, and to continue to be a strong loving presence in their lives. Matt went from being hesitant to join to wanting to give back after graduating all areas of the program, he is now a trained facilitator and a Citizen Father. He has traveled and presented about his transformation, and his passion within is to help other fathers experience the same by serving them with hope and light.

Since launching in 2011, CHI St. Joseph's Health Community Health FATHER Project has been making a positive impact in the community by providing life-changing support for families. The Project's mission is to help any and all fathers, custodial or non-custodial, or anyone filling in as a father figure (step dads, grandparents, foster parents) learn healthy parenting skills and behaviors, as well as overcome barriers that have prevented them from providing emotional and financial support for their children. By participating in this voluntary step-by-step, multi-class program, participants learn an array of fathering skills that include healthy disciplinary approaches, parenting and communication styles, and co-parenting skills. Some participants go on to become "citizen fathers," a special achievement for dads who excel in the program and exemplify strong leadership and fathering skills.

Over the past six years, over 350 dads have been enrolled in The FATHER Project and been empowered to overcome the barriers that prevented them from supporting their children economically and emotionally. "By eliminating barriers and providing a variety of services, we have addressed many social issues affecting our community. We continue to help each individual along the path to achieving goals and becoming independent, productive members for their families and communities." said Marlee Morrison, CHI St. Joseph's Health Community Health Director.

To learn more about the FATHER Project or to sign up, please contact Joe Johnson at 218.255.2063 or JosephJohnson@catholichealth.net. To make a donation, please contact CHI St. Joseph's Health Foundation at 218.616.3383.

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Cutline

Joe Johnson, CHI St. Joseph's Health Community Health Father Project Coordinator high fiving fathers during a group meeting in Park Rapids, MN.

About CHI St. Joseph's Health

CHI St. Joseph's Health is a 25-bed critical access hospital serving communities in Hubbard, Becker, Cass and Wadena Counties since 1946. In recent years, CHI St. Joseph's Health's award-winning teams received several national honors including: The Joint Commission Top Performer on Key Quality Measures in surgery; Top 100 Critical Access Hospital, HealthStrong; WomenCertified's America's Best Hospitals Women's Choice Award in obstetrics; and the Studer Group Fire Starter Healthcare Organization of the Month among other national, regional and state recognitions.

About CHI

St. Joseph Hospital is part of Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), a national nonprofit health system based in Englewood, Colorado. The faith-based system operates in 18 states and includes 103 hospitals, as well as long-term care, assisted- and residential living communities; community health services organizations; home health agencies and outpatient facilities and services. In fiscal year 2016, CHI provided more than \$1.1 billion in financial assistance and community benefit. CHI generated operating revenues of \$15.9 billion and has total assets of approximately \$22.7 billion.

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