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This is a joint news release issued by the Whiteside County Health Department, Morrison Community Hospital, CGH Medical Centers, Representative Tony McCombie, Senator Neil Anderson, County Board Chair James Duffy, Mayor Bill Wescott, Mayor Skip Lee, Mayor Mike Ottens, Mayor Everett Pannier, Mayor Brian Rowland, Mayor Kristine Hill, Mayor Marcia Smith, Mayor Steve Swanson, Mayor Sally Douglas, Acting Mayor Becky Piester, Sheriff John Booker, Sauk Valley Chamber of Commerce

Help Us Help You: A Message from Your Community Leaders

October 9, 2020 – As Whiteside County faces increasing positive COVID-19 case numbers, additional mitigation measures, and concerns around medical capacity and resources, your community leaders need your help now more than ever. We know you are anxious to get back to normal—we are, too. We want our children and teachers to have safe, in-person education. We want our local bars and restaurants to open up again to indoor dining. We want our healthcare workers to experience more manageable workloads and balanced family lives. And we want the upcoming holiday celebrations this fall and winter to spread healing and hope—not COVID-19

However, until we can limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community and reduce the positivity rate, our schools, our local businesses, our healthcare workers and our community will continue to suffer. We can only return to normal if we put forth a strong, unified effort as a community to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We must reclaim the health of Whiteside County together by being intentional about the choices we make today, tomorrow and as we move forward.

You have the power to turn the tide on COVID-19 and help restore our schools, businesses, healthcare facilities, and community events by following public health recommendations to protect your friends, family and neighbors. Please, help us so we can help you, Whiteside County.

We urge all businesses and individuals to follow the following guidelines to try to keep our community safe:

- **Stay 6 feet apart** any time you are with someone who doesn't live with you. Social distancing applies in both public and private settings, indoors and outdoors.
- **Wear a mask** around anyone you don't live with. Masks have been proven to reduce transmission and should be worn in all indoor places, public or private, and anywhere you can't stay 6 feet apart, even outdoors.
- **Stay home if you feel unwell.** Do not go into work, get together with friends, attend school or run errands. Call your medical provider for instructions and to talk about testing..
- **Wash your hands** frequently and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- **Don't assume it's allergies, test.** COVID-19 symptoms can mimic many common ailments, and is being spread in our community by those who have misattributed their symptoms. If you routinely suffer from allergies or sinus infectious you may need to test semi-regularly. You only know if you test.
- **Answer the call.** Protect your friends, family and community by working with the health department to identify all your close contacts and where you may have been exposed.
- **Use drive-thru, curbside pickup, takeout and delivery** options to support local businesses. Wear a mask whenever you interact with food service workers to help keep them safe, even if you are in your vehicle.
- **Discontinue non-essential gatherings**, such as in-person meetings and parties during Resurgence Mitigations.
- **Limit non-essential travel**, including traveling for work, social gatherings, weddings, events and sports.
- **Limit the number of people** you see in person regularly to a small group. COVID-19 spreads through close contact so the more people you interact with, the greater the risk of spreading COVID-19 and more lives disrupted if someone tests positive for the virus later.
- **Space gatherings out** especially if you will be meeting with different people. Try to keep 5-7 days between each get together or gathering to limit potential spread and help ensure everyone remains healthy.
- **Keep students safe.** Schools are working hard to keep kids safe through social distancing and masking. Encourage the same outside of school too. Consider limiting hangouts to kids that attend the same in person classes.
- **Leave** when people are not masking or social distancing, or if the gathering is too large, crowded or enclosed.
- **Stay up-to-date** with local and state guidance and encourage your friends and family to follow it too.