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Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation's 2020 Innovation Awards focus on healthcare and young people

ST. CLOUD, Minn. / Oct. 13, 2020 – Two organizations focused on ways to more affordably deliver healthcare and two others focused on helping area young people succeed will be the recipients of the Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation's (GSDC) 9th annual Innovation Awards, to be presented on Thursday, Nov. 5.

Since the Innovation Awards' inception in 2012, the GSDC has honored 26 for-profit and non-profit organizations that have developed new products or approaches to benefit the Greater St. Cloud region and beyond. The latest four organizations to join that group, listed alphabetically, follow.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota

The Boys & Girls Clubs launched CareerSTART in Sept. 2019 to provide exploration, development and application of career paths for school children. Starting with children as young as kindergarten age, CareerSTART helps them with such essential skills as teamwork, creativity, communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, critical thinking and self-confidence. CareerSTART has enabled Boys & Girls Clubs staff to reach beyond the organization's walls to the business community-at-large to expose youth to careers across every industry.

"We want every young person in our area to be career ready," said Mary Swingle, President & CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota. "With CareerSTART, we're providing them more tools than ever to do so. We have a strong history of collaborating with the community, but CareerSTART has taken these partnerships to the next level."

Additional information is at www.bgcmn.org/careerstart.

Pathways 4 Youth

Started in 2018 by three St. Cloud area Rotary and Rotaract Clubs, Pathways 4 Youth provides a safe and nurturing environment for young people between 16 and 24 years of age experiencing homelessness.

With its youth resource center located at 204 Cooper Avenue North, Pathways provides at-risk youth with a food shelf and clothing, hot meals and showers, help with job searches and more. To date, Pathways has had more 2,500 visits from youth experiencing homelessness. Of those receiving jobs and housing, 90 percent were still working or housed six months later.

"A lot of area organizations provide invaluable resources that allow us to help address this critical need," said Pathways co-founder Tim Wensman, a Rotarian who volunteers with other leaders to direct the center's operations. "It's rewarding to have many success stories of young people we've helped get their lives turned around."

More information is at www.Pathways4YouthMN.org.

The following two 2020 Innovation Award recipients are health clinics that each offer direct primary care, which means patients have the option to pay for medical services through monthly memberships rather than using health insurance.

Sartell Family Medicine

Sartell Family Medicine, founded in 2018, is one of Minnesota's first clinics to offer solely direct primary care (DPC), meaning they do not take insurance in any form. Instead, the clinic contracts with patients and businesses directly, allowing unlimited access to their medical providers at an affordable monthly rate.

"As an organization that is not beholden to the administrative burdens of health insurance, we are able to concentrate on patients rather than paperwork, while providing affordable, accessible and high-quality healthcare," said Dr. Cody W. Wendlandt, the clinic's founder and medical director.

Sartell Family Medicine also offers many medications, laboratory studies and procedures at minimal cost. Members of the community can make appointments for their in-house mental health counseling, physical therapy and urgent care.

More information is at www.SartellFamilyMedicine.com.

Simplicity Health

St. Cloud's Simplicity Health also provides direct primary care, through memberships for people who are either uninsured or have extremely high deductibles that are seldom met. But the clinic also accepts traditional insurance.

"Most people believe they must use their health insurance for their care, including for prescriptions," said Dr. Julie Anderson, founder of the clinic that opened in 2018. "However, most of the time it is more financially appealing to pay cash for similar services and save the insurance for high-ticket items like hospitalization or surgeries."

She added, "I left corporate medicine when I heard of patients avoiding medical office visits to save money. I knew that there must be an alternative. We're pleased to provide it."

More information is at www.SimplicityHealthMN.com.

"As part of our role to help individual companies and the community prosper, the Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation fosters and promotes innovative thinking," said Leslie Dingmann, EDFP, the GSDC's Business Development Director and coordinator of the Innovation Awards. "The Boys & Girls Clubs, Pathways 4 Youth, Sartell Family Medicine and Simplicity Health are excellent examples of the innovation in our community."

The Nov. 5 Innovation Awards ceremony will be included as part of a GSDC meeting of investors, which will be held via Zoom, and each awardee will receive \$1,000.

The GSDC, a non-profit (501c3) organization, is a private collaboration of regional businesses and community leaders within Benton, Sherburne and Stearns counties that leads Greater St. Cloud economic development efforts by engaging leaders, expanding talent, growing business and shaping tomorrow. The GSDC is funded through business investments, public sector contributions, individual contributions and grants, and its actions are governed by the organization's investors, boards and various committees. Additional information is at www.GreaterStCloud.com.

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