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## Media Release

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# St. Cloud Hospital earns 'LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader' designation in HRC Foundation's Healthcare Equality Index

**St. Cloud, Minn.** – St. Cloud Hospital received the “LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC). The designation was awarded in the 11th edition of the [Healthcare Equality Index \(HEI\)](#), released March 27.

A record 626 health care facilities actively participated in the HEI 2018 survey, with HRC Foundation proactively researching key policies at more than 900 additional non-participating hospitals. Of those included in the HEI, 418 earned a “LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation. St. Cloud Hospital is one of four Minnesota hospitals to achieve this designation.

“We are honored by the recognition,” said Program Director Joni Steffens, APRN, CSC, CentraCare Health Gender Medicine program. “We strive every day to provide inclusive care for our LGBTQ patients and families.”

“With some of our biggest battles still ahead of us, it is crucial that institutions continue to demonstrate that the march toward full equality is not slowing down,” said HRC President Chad Griffin. “The 626 participants in this year’s HEI continue this march in partnership with the LGBTQ community and we commend them for their leadership. For over a decade, the HEI has been the roadmap to closing the gap in ensuring equal care to LGBTQ patients and their families, and we urge every health care facility to join us in this continuing effort to provide inclusive care to all.”

The 11th edition of the HEI marks the second year that participants are given a numerical score based on their LGBTQ-inclusive policies and practices. HEI participants are given scores in four criteria: foundational elements of LGBTQ patient-centered care, LGBTQ Patient Services and

Support, Employee Benefits and Policies and LGBTQ Patient and Community Engagement. Participants that receive the maximum score in each section earn the coveted status of “2018 LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader.”

In the 2018 report, an impressive 418 facilities earned HRC’s “LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation with a score of 100. Another 95 facilities earned the “Top Performer” designation for scoring from 80 to 95 points. With 82 percent of participating facilities scoring 80 points or more, healthcare facilities are going beyond the basics when it comes to adopting policies and practices in LGBTQ care.

Of the hospitals who did not participate in the HEI but were scored based on research, only 63 percent have patient non-discrimination policies that include both “sexual orientation” and “gender identity,” and only 53 percent were found to have an LGBTQ-inclusive employment non-discrimination policy. The equal visitation policy, at 93 percent, is the only one that comes close to matching the rate of the participating facilities.

### **About the Human Rights Campaign Foundation**

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is education arm of America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.

### **About CentraCare Health**

CentraCare Health is a not-for-profit health care system that provides comprehensive, high-quality care to people throughout Central Minnesota. Our collaborative network includes hospitals in St. Cloud, Long Prairie, Melrose, Monticello, Paynesville Sauk Centre and Willmar, more than 35 clinics, along with nursing homes and senior housing in several communities.

CentraCare also operates numerous specialty services, including the CentraCare Heart & Vascular Center, Coborn Cancer Center and the CentraCare Kidney Program. CentraCare serves all who seek care with compassion, dignity and respect, while seeking to enhance individual and community health. For more information, please visit [centracare.com](http://centracare.com).

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