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## **Essentia Health Sugary Beverage Phase-out Creates Statewide Wellness Model** *Duluth's largest employer phases-out sugary beverage sales in Wisconsin and Minnesota*

(Duluth, MN) Beginning July 1, Essentia Health will remove sugar-sweetened beverages from its downtown Duluth and Superior campuses, joining other health systems nationwide in creating models of health promotion. This important announcement is consistent with a national trend in healthcare institutions which includes the Cleveland Clinic, Packard Children's Hospital, Chicago based Vanguard System, Baylor Health System and more.

"Essentia's sugary beverage phase-out is a call to action for all Minnesota hospitals and employers" stated Jamie Harvie, Institute for a Sustainable Future Executive Director and Commons Health Hospital Challenge coordinator. "Essentia's sugary beverage phase-out is landmark as it sets the statewide stage for "healthcare outside hospital walls" - comprehensive workplace and community healthy beverage policies."

Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is "the single largest contributor of calories and added sugars to the American diet" according to the Institutes of Medicine. Studies overwhelmingly show that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) leads to weight gain and obesity which in turn promote diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer and many other health problems.

In a statement of support for the Hospital Challenge the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics states, "We believe it is easier for providers to encourage better nutrition when these choices are being modeled by the local clinics and hospitals in which we serve".

In 2012, the Minnesota Medical Association adopted Resolution 205 which support efforts to encourage Minnesota physicians to use guidance which includes **zero sugary beverages** to discuss healthy weight at every well visit.

Carlton –Cook- Lake- St. Louis Community Health Board data indicates that 55% of twelfth grade students drank one or more sodas in the last day. Nearly one quarter (22%) of 12th grade adolescents are overweight and obese and approximately half of all adults (47%) are overweight and obese. According to estimates the Duluth metropolitan area spends \$140,000,000 annually on obesity related healthcare expenses.

“Though we cannot expect hospitals to resolve our obesity crisis, we can expect them to model the health promoting policies and practices needed in our workplaces, schools, communities and our homes”, stated Nancy Sudak, M.D. a Duluth based family physician and Executive Director of the American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine. “Essentia’s sugary beverage phase-out is an important step in the creation of a healthy community and sends a powerful message of mindful beverage consumption to the broad community Essentia serves”.

Essentia’s commitment meets one of the three goals of the [Commons Health Hospital Challenge](#) . These goals include the elimination of sugary beverages sales, measurable commitment to local food, and support for the Baby Friendly Hospital guidelines. The Commons Health Hospital Challenge is endorsed by an expanding list of supporters including the Lake Superior Medical Society, American Heart Association, the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Minnesota Cancer Alliance and more.

A variety of tools and resources for hospitals and communities interested in sugary beverage elimination are available on the [Commons Health Hospital Challenge](#) website. Essentia has developed [FAQ's on their sugary beverage phase-out](#). Through support of the Hospital Challenge seven Northland hospitals, with the addition of Essentia, have now eliminated sugary beverages demonstrating an important leadership model. The Challenge is funded in part by the Statewide Health Improvement Project.

The Hospital Challenge is coordinated by the [Institute for a Sustainable Future](#) (ISF) a not-for-profit organization working to support and improve ecological health, through advocacy, research, consultation and education. ISF provides expertise on environmental toxins, health care design and healthy food systems internationally.

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