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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 2, 2020

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First Death Attributed to COVID-19 in Steele County

Sadly, a Steele County Resident has passed away and the death has been attributed to the COVID-19 Virus. Amy Caron, Steele County Public Health Director, was notified by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) of the confirmation. "Our sincere condolences go out to the family during this difficult time. We hope that someday a vaccine will be created to help combat this virus, so others do not have to suffer." Caron said.

Currently the cumulative total positive COVID-19 cases in Steele County is 223 people. Approximately 173 of those cases are out of isolation and deemed healthy at this time. The age groups affected have been between 1 year to those in their 70's. There are currently 2 Steele County residents that are hospitalized, needing extra care to assist them with the symptoms of the virus. Steele County Public Health continues to work with MDH and area Healthcare Partners to address the needs of these patients and provide guidance to others who may have contact with them.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread primarily by respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also spread when people touch surfaces that have been contaminated by an infected person and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. There is much we do not know about this virus. However, there are things we can do to protect ourselves, our family members, our neighbors and our vulnerable populations. You can do this by taking the following actions:

- Wear a cloth face mask when you are out in public; especially when out getting groceries, supplies or medications. The mask will not protect you but will protect others in case you are carrying the virus unknowingly.
- If you are currently carpooling to your work or other places, please consider other options. If you do not have any other options wear a cloth face mask for some protection.
- Practice Social or Physical Distancing from others by keeping a distance of 6 feet between you and others out in public.
- If you have an underlying health condition or are an older adult, take precautions now. Consider limiting any visitors to your home. Consider asking others to assist you in

getting the things you need, such as groceries or medications so that you do not have to go out where there are groups of people.

- Do not gather in large groups. Find new ways to conduct your daily business. Make use of technology and use phones, FaceTime, Skype and other ways to communicate
- Stay home if you have cold or flu-like symptoms and avoid close contact with people who are sick. Try to separate other people in your household from any members that are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or into your sleeve, and then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom or before eating. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face – especially your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, stay home until all three of these things are true:
 - You feel better. Your cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms are better.
and
 - It has been 10 days since you first felt sick.
and
 - You have had no fever for the last three days, without using medicine that lowers fevers.
- If a lab test shows you have COVID-19, someone from the health department will give you more information and answer your questions.

The most reliable and up to date information on coronavirus can be found at The Centers for Disease Control www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov and Minnesota Department of Health www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus websites. There is also an MDH hotline number at: 1-800-657-3504. Local questions can be answered by Steele County Public Health at: (507) 444-7650.