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**For Immediate Release**

## **Illinois Principals Association Names 2020 Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award: Principal Matt Birdsley and Whiteside County Health Department**

Matt Birdsley, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Sterling Public Schools CUSD 5, Sterling, and Beth Fiorini of the Whiteside County Health Department have received the 2020 Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award from the Illinois Principals Association, sponsored by Horace Mann Companies, for their partnership to provide a school-based health clinic at Challand Middle School.

The Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award was created to recognize an IPA principal or assistant principal, and an agency, association, or community member displaying an outstanding effort in creating partnerships between schools, principals, associations, and organizations for the betterment of all.

The school-based clinic at Challand Middle School provides school and sports physicals and sees students for health-related appointments to any student, regardless of their financial circumstances or insurance coverage. The clinic also provides behavioral health services through a social worker working within the school to service student social-emotional needs. The Whiteside County Health Department staffs the clinic with medical personnel and the school provides the space.

“This partnership is a result of the school reviewing the community needs data in partnership with the health department and CGH Hospital in Sterling,” said Birdsley. “Through this partnership, we hope to provide medical and behavioral health services within the school day to limit the amount of time students are out of school and make medical treatment readily available to all students. We are bringing the services to the students in a unique way that could not be possible without the local agency’s partnership.”

“The partnership between Sterling Public Schools, Whiteside County Community Health Clinic, CGH Medical Center, Sinnissippi Mental Health Services, the United Way, and the Regional Office of Education will have a dramatic impact on the physical and emotional health of students in our community,” said Kristie A. Geil, Vice President of Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer of CGH Medical Center. “Preventative care through physicals, vaccinations, health screening, and education allows us for early intervention to prevent long term chronic diseases like obesity and mental illness. The school-based health clinic also eliminates many of the challenges associated with access and transportation for students and families.”

Birdsley and Fiorini will be recognized at a special ceremony during the IPA Education Leaders Annual Conference in October 2020.

The Illinois Principals Association serves over 5,800 educational leaders statewide and whose mission is to develop, support, and advocate for innovative educational leaders. The Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award is supported by Horace Mann Companies of Springfield, IL. For more information about the IPA, please visit [www.ilprincipals.org](http://www.ilprincipals.org).

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