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**CYCLING WITHOUT AGE WILLMAR RECEIVES COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AWARD**  
**Bethesda and City of Willmar Recognized for Innovative Partnership and Positive Outcomes**

SAINT PAUL – (Feb 13, 2019) – Bethesda Willmar recently received a Stars Among Us Community Collaboration Award from LeadingAge Minnesota for its innovative Cycling Without Age initiative that was conducted in partnership with the City of Willmar.

The Community Collaboration award recognizes an aging services provider that collaborates with a city, agency, community group or other business to go beyond its traditional long-term care role to support and improve the greater community.

“Cycling Without Age is building bridges between generations in the City of Willmar while bringing connection, engagement and joy to its elderly residents,” said Gayle Kvenvold, President and CEO, LeadingAge Minnesota. “Collaboration between those who provide care to our aging citizens and the communities in which they reside is integral to the quality of life for our elderly. We congratulate Bethesda and the City of Willmar for their partnership in bringing a new idea to life and changing the lives of the seniors and volunteers who have benefited from the program.”

Cycling Without Aging is the first program of its kind in Greater Minnesota and only one of two programs in the state. Its goal is to benefit the health and wellness of a community, build new relationships, reduce isolation and break down the stigma associated with aging.

“Many of us take for granted the simple act of being able to go on a bike ride. Cycling Without Age allows our seniors to remain an active and engaged part of our community while providing them the opportunity to go on a bike ride,” said Ashley Borman, TITLE, Bethesda.

The bikes used in the Cycling Without Age program is a trishaw, a special bike that allows a volunteer peddler or “pilot” to bring one to two other people for a ride in the front seat of the bike. Bethesda first became interested in the program as an activity for its residents but recognized the greater value it could bring to the entire Willmar community. With the help of the City of Willmar and Mayor Marvin Calvin, Bethesda assembled a team of community partners to establish the program, build awareness and excitement in the community, secure funding and recruit volunteers for the program.

The trishaw is available for Bethesda residents as well as other organizations and clubs to check-out and enjoy free of charge. The bikes have appeared at such events as the Walk to End Alzheimer’s, Rockin’ Robbins, WillmarFest, Mayor’s Bike Ride and Life Connection. Open community ride days have also been scheduled for members of the community.

“Bethesda is a dedicated partner in enhancing quality of life for seniors in Willmar. I couldn’t be prouder of this partnership. It is bringing our community together and providing a way for the elderly and those who are less-abled to stay connected to the community,” said Marv Calvin, Mayor, City of Willmar.

Bethesda will expand the program in 2019 with the purchase of four additional trishaws. While the initial program was funded through volunteer donations, both Bethesda and the City of Willmar have

plans to seek additional funding partners as well as support the initiative through their annual operating budgets.

**About LeadingAge Minnesota**

Driven to transform and enhance the experience of aging, LeadingAge Minnesota works alongside its members, caregivers, advocates and consumers to collectively shape the future of aging services and ensure older adults in every community live with dignity, meaning and purpose. Together with more than 60,000 caregivers, LeadingAge Minnesota members provide quality services and supports to nearly 70,000 older adults every day in independent senior housing, assisted living communities, adult day, in-home care and skilled nursing facilities.

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