FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19: Being Thankful
By Dr. Michele Dikkers, Chair of Clayton County Board of Health

As we enter November, my mind automatically goes to Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving should remind all of us to be thankful. I try to be thankful every day, not just in November. It can be simple things or big things. The sun coming up in the morning.

The moon and stars shining in the sky at night. Seeing the wonder of the Mississippi River every day. Washing machines, so much better than a rock down by the river. There’s my car, much better than an ox and a wagon.

I am thankful that I get to do a job that I enjoy. I treasure the privilege of taking care of the people in my community. I work with medical providers that feel the same way. We look forward to challenges and being able to be available to our patients in their time of need.

Then came a new coronavirus, COVID-19. It has changed our lives too.

Though we have been aware of COVID-19 and watched it ravage the states on the east coast, then the west coast and then the south, we maintained lower case numbers, until now. The number of new cases in the state of Iowa, per day held steady, under 1000, until the beginning of October. The past week as seen over 3500 new cases daily. Over the past 2 weeks, the number of cases in Clayton County has increased over 200 cases. Local clinics are seeing 50-80% of those tested, testing positive for COVID-19.

This disease is just starting to hit our state. As we study the curves from other states, we know that from the beginning of an increase in the curve (number of cases), until it begins to slow, is approximately 12 weeks.

The number of admissions for many hospitals in NE Iowa are at, or very near, capacity.

The number of deaths in Iowa has risen to over 1800 people. That is the population of Guttenberg. A whole town gone.

There is a desperate need to slow the spread of this disease, flatten the curve and protect our community.

I am thankful for the people I work with. All of them, housekeeping to plant management to receptionists to nursing staff, therapy, lab techs, radiology techs, etc., there are too many to mention. Guttenberg Municipal Hospital & Clinics employs approximately 160 staff members, MercyOne in Elkader employs approximately 100 staff members.

They are working extra shifts, working in departments other than their own, trying to find extra room for extra beds/admissions and how to care for them with the staff we have and coming up with new policies and processes to better care for the ill patients of our community.

There have been businesses in the community that have made donations to the workers. We have received pizza, donuts, drinks, and support. We are thankful for our community, and their support.
An effective way to support our medical community, care providers and support staff, would be to wear a mask, decrease the numbers of cases, flatten the curve. Help decrease the numbers of people needing to be hospitalized. Help decrease the number of deaths.

It is a privilege to serve this community, but it will take more than just the medical professionals to fight this fight, it will take all of our community. We are asking for help in protecting our community.

PLEASE, wear masks. It is vital. It is the best tool we have to prevent the spread.

Help flatten the curve.

Wear masks, Wash your hands and Watch your distance.

Due to the current surge, there may be weeks I am unable to submit an article.

Thank you for your support.

Remember, we are in this together. We must flatten the curve.