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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Caption: Zomi Bloom, Telehealth Program Manager with Wilderness Health, collects community ideas for improved mental healthcare in rural NE Minnesota.

Mental and Behavioral Healthcare Needs in Ely Wilderness Health Hosts Community Listening Sessions

Ely, Minn. - Mental and behavioral health needs remain a challenge throughout the state of Minnesota, and the unique needs of rural Minnesotans require targeted attention. To learn more about the needs of residents of Northern St. Louis County, Wilderness Health invited community members to share their stories and help shape the future of mental health care. The listening session was held on Friday, June 28th at the Ely Senior Center in Ely, MN. This was the second event in a series being held across Northeastern Minnesota.

Attendees shared stories of the ongoing challenges of navigating mental and behavioral healthcare. The group expressed the need for mental healthcare coordination across the lifespan, from children with developmental needs, to teens who are learning to navigate the healthcare system, and those who are

aging and needing specialized cognitive services. Other gaps in care included a lack of culturally relevant mental health professionals, as well as experienced mental health professionals. The group identified that communities could benefit from increased access points to care, standard screening and response at all ages, and increased after-hours or telehealth services for both mental health and primary (family doctor) care.

According to Zomi Bloom, Telehealth Program Manager for Wilderness Health and program manager of the new project around mental and behavioral health care coordination, “We are honored to hear directly from community members. We want to understand their vision of easily navigating the system of mental and behavioral healthcare. We also know that primary care and family doctors make a big difference in ensuring overall well-being – but it’s not always easy to get out of work or arrange for childcare to go to the doctor.”

For Ely and surrounding area residents who missed the listening session, Wilderness is collecting feedback directly. Please email your thoughts to info@wildernesshealthmn.org or call Zomi Bloom at 218-834-7323.

The event was supplemented by local Graphic Recorder Nelle Rhicard, who will compile feedback across the region into pictures that tell the story of community needs and hopes.



Caption: Nelle Rhicard records the listening session while Zomi Bloom listens to feedback from the attendees.

Impact of the Listening Sessions on the Future of Care

Through funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Rural Health Network Development Program, Wilderness Health and rural Northeastern Minnesota communities will identify successes, barriers, and possible solutions. For questions about the regional listening sessions please reach out to Zomi Bloom at 218-834-7323 or zomi.bloom@wildernesshealthmn.org.

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About Wilderness Health- a non-profit collaborative of independent providers working together to improve rural health care in Northeastern Minnesota and Wisconsin. Headquartered in Two Harbors since 2013, Wilderness Health aims to create a unified and supportive network for its members through its core values of collaboration, independence, networking, and quality. For more information about Wilderness, visit <https://wildernesshealthmn.org/>.

Wilderness Health Members:

Bigfork Valley Hospital
Community Memorial Hospital
Cook Hospital
Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital
Fairview Range / Range Regional Health Services
Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital
Aspirus Lake View
North Shore Health
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