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CHA to Recognize Bristol Health's Christine Ieronimo, RN, as a Healthcare Hero

WALLINGFORD – At its 101st Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 20, 2019, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) will recognize Christine Ieronimo, RN, Bristol Health, as a 2019 Healthcare Hero. She was nominated by Chris Ann Meaney for this award.

When Ms. Ieronimo, visited Gimbichu, Ethiopia, to reunite her adopted daughter with her birth mother, she discovered a gap in knowledge about maternity care among the local community. When she returned home, Ms. Ieronimo decided to take action and began collecting items for the clinic in Gimbichu in hopes of encouraging women to receive care and deliver their babies at the clinic.

Over time, and after the donation of hundreds of baby receiving blankets, news about the blankets spread within the Gimbichu community and the number of women visiting the clinic increased greatly – the Gimbichu Blanket Project was born. Gimbichu Blanket Project has become an ongoing source for providing local Ethiopian women with both physical comfort and confidence in using the clinic's services. The increased use of the Gimbichu clinic has the potential to reduce morbidity and mortality among local women and their newborn babies.

"The act of giving them a blanket as a 'present' makes them feel cared about," said Ms. Ieronimo. "They are more likely to reach out for help in the event that they have a need or a problem. It is a win-win for everyone." Ms. Ieronimo has returned to Gimbichu several times, most recently last summer when she delivered more than 300 donated blankets. As a result of her efforts, the clinic now offers postnatal information sessions for new moms in and around the community.

The Gimbichu Blanket Project extends the influence of nursing to a rural Ethiopian population. With the simple comfort of receiving blankets for new mothers, along with financial contributions, Ms. Ieronimo's volunteer global health initiative increased access to healthcare among pregnant Ethiopian women.

According to the United States Agency for International Development, Ethiopia has one of the world's highest rates of maternal death and disability. Each year in Ethiopia, women have a 1 in 52 chance of dying from factors related to childbirth. Neonatal deaths account for greater than 60 percent of infant deaths in Ethiopia.

CHA's Healthcare Heroes award was developed in 2002 to celebrate the invaluable contributions of healthcare workers, both to their field and to the community at large. Now in its 17th year, the presentation of the Healthcare Heroes awards has become a highlight of CHA's Annual Meeting.



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About CHA

The Connecticut Hospital Association has been dedicated to serving Connecticut's hospitals and health systems since 1919. Through state and federal advocacy, CHA represents the interests of Connecticut's hospitals and health systems on key healthcare issues in the areas of quality and patient safety, access and coverage, workforce, community health, health equity, and hospital reimbursement.