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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LifeCircles PACE creates new leadership position to better serve frail seniors living on the Lakeshore.

Holland & Muskegon, MI, August 12, 2020/ Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic LifeCircles PACE has worked hard to support seniors in avoiding nursing homes and live safely in their own home. To provide critical health care, therapies and personal care to frail seniors is no small feat – even in good times. The LifeCircles team saw the need to create a new position to better support staff in the delivery of high quality medical and social care to frail seniors. Heidi Gras, LMSW has been promoted to the newly created Strategic Director of Health Plan Operations. “Michigan’s population of older adults is growing rapidly. Nearly a quarter of Michigan’s residents are over 60 years of age, and most of them prefer to live in their own homes as they age”, says Luke Reynolds, LifeCircles Executive Director. “We created this strategic leadership position to focus our organization on strategies to better serve seniors with chronic care needs, especially people with limited resources who prefer to remain in their own homes.”

Heidi Gras is a licensed master social worker whom is a graduate of Hope College (BA) and Grand Valley State University (MSW). During her 10-year tenure with LifeCircles she has worked as a geriatric social worker, social work supervisor, and most recently provided guidance and oversight to the LifeCircles Holland PACE program as the Director of Interdisciplinary Operations. LifeCircles PACE now serves over 350 vulnerable older adults and their families across Muskegon, Ottawa, and Allegan counties. Heidi’s wonderful ability to help formulate and guide the LifeCircles mission and vision has resulted in outstanding outcomes and satisfaction rates, in addition to a highly supported and fully engaged workforce.

Heidi embraces this expanded leadership role and identifies the positive workplace culture and wonderful mission as the primary reasons she loves her work. She explains, “The COVID-19 pandemic has really challenged the long-term care health sector, which has historically relied on institutional care settings.” Since the emergency was declared, LifeCircles has had very few COVID positive patients and no related deaths. Supporting people in their own homes has resulted in less exposure risk for vulnerable older adults. “We are providing highly customized in-home care by well-trained staff with PPE and telemedicine interventions. When it is safe to do so, our incredible day centers will resume full scale operations”.

About LifeCircles: *Serving West Michigan’s Lakeshore for over 10 years with a complete health and social program that allows frail older adults to live in their own communities rather than move into traditional nursing homes. Since its founding, LifeCircles has served nearly 1000 seniors who live in Muskegon, Ottawa and Allegan counties. The program employs nearly 150 individuals between its Holland and Muskegon locations. PACE serves the social, medical, and supportive needs of older adults, ages 55 and up, who live within the PACE service area, and are functionally eligible. PACE programs offer a cost-effective alternative to nursing home care, providing overall savings of 40% to Michigan taxpayers. LifeCircles was created through support from three local equity partners: Mercy Health, UMRC & Porter Hills, and Senior Resources. Find out more about LifeCircles PACE by calling 231-733-8655, 616-582-3100, by visiting www.LifeCircles-PACE.org or find them on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/lifecirclespace).*

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