

For Immediate Release

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Gundersen Health System Archives Awarded the 2018 Governor's Archives Award for Archival Achievement

La Crosse, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society is pleased to present Gundersen Health System Archives with the 2018 Governor's Archives Award for Archival Achievement. An award presentation will be held on Monday, September 17, 2018 at Gundersen Health System (1900 South Avenue, La Crosse, WI 54601) in the John & Nettie Mooney Library & Gundersen Archives, Level 1, Hospital, from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

"Gundersen Archives is receiving this award for the rescue and preservation, arrangement and description, digitization, and archival outreach involving the records of the Gundersen Clinic, Lutheran Hospital and the School of Nursing," said Matt Blessing, State Archivist for the Wisconsin Historical Society. "The work that they've done is integral to the history of medicine in Wisconsin and the history of western Wisconsin."

There will be a short ceremony followed by brunch, a demonstration and tours. Guests will have a chance to see a demonstration of the Gundersen Family Letters Database and to see the archives office and storage as well as several historical displays.

Gundersen Health System is a major employer in the La Crosse metropolitan area with a rich history in the region. In the late 19th century, Dr. Adolf Gundersen, a Norwegian immigrant, became the city's leading physician. Six of Adolf's seven sons became physicians, while four of his sons joined their father at the Gundersen Clinic and helped to launch the practice into prominence in Wisconsin's medical history.

In 2013, Dr. A. Erik Gundersen and Kay Cimpl Wagner, MLS, began an effort to save Gundersen Health System historical documents and medical artifacts from an unstable storage building. Among broken and discarded furniture, Gundersen and Wagner identified unique photographs, letters, printed materials, and medical apparatus that will help tell the story of modern medicine in La Crosse. One treasure included more than 2,300 letters -- the correspondence between Adolf Gundersen, his wife and other family members. Many letters were handwritten in Norwegian and date to 1893.

Wagner consulted with professional archivists throughout the region to learn about best practices in archival administration. For the next several years, she and Gundersen cleaned, identified, and inventoried materials; then selectively scanned and digitized materials. Moreover, Gundersen Health System has supported the development of an oral history program that captures the memories of long-term medical staff. To date, 37 interviews with emeritus physicians have been conducted.

The Gundersen Health System Archives formally opened in late 2017. The Gundersen Archives is now accessible to staff and the public, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. In addition, the Gundersen Health System has supported the development of a permanent "history wall" in a heavy-traffic section of the La Crosse hospital, and the Gundersen Archives supports several rotating historical displays.

The Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board (WHRAB) and the Wisconsin Historical Society award the Governor's Archives Award to individuals, programs or organizations that have made significant contributions to preserving or increasing the availability of original historical documents in any format.

For more information visit wisconsinhistory.org.

About Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs and services. For more information, visit www.wisconsinhistory.org.

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