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Cook Children's Hires Organization's First Chief Diversity Officer

Fort Worth, Texas – Cook Children's CEO Rick Merrill announced today that Winifred King, Assistant Vice President of Public Relations, Corporate Communications and Social Media has been promoted to the newly created position of Chief Diversity Officer. As part of the health care system's executive leadership team, King will help guide Cook Children's in building a more diverse organization, while furthering efforts of equity and inclusion. This promotion comes after King's more than 13 years of service, in which time she played a pivotal role in establishing Cook Children's reputation nationally.

"I've always been impressed with Wini's love for Cook Children's and her desire to do the right thing for our patients, their families and our staff," said Merrill. "She understands the importance of honest conversation and has always pushed for the integrity of this institution. I believe she will bring her passion for this place and its people to this new role."

The creation of the Chief Diversity Officer position follows the organization's statement issued in June saying in part: "Cook Children's believes in a culture of inclusiveness and diversity. We encourage empathy and understanding of how others feel and guidance for issues we may not fully understand." Shortly after the release of this statement, Mr. Merrill announced the decision to hire the organization's first Chief Diversity Officer.

"It is hard to put into words what this decision and investment means to people of color and anyone who has ever felt different or excluded," said King. "For all of us who may have experienced inequities and mistreatment in our lifetimes, it is comforting to be a part of an organization that accepts our differences, our failures, and is willing to look inward and truly examine what is at the heart of our culture."

Before joining Cook Children's, King was employed by Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas, and Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, where she worked in brand marketing, promotions and public relations for 11 years. She is also a former broadcast journalist and plans to use her storytelling skills in her new role.

"I believe stories have the power to create empathy and allow us to see others through a different lens than our own," said King. "I want the entire health care system to be thinking about how their actions, their work, and their speech impacts others negatively and positively."

King is a member and leader of the Greater Fort Worth Chapter of Public Relations Society of America. She has also served on the boards of Young Women's Leadership Academy and TCU's student-driven PR and ad agency, ROXO. She will maintain her position as leader of communications at Cook Children's.

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About Cook Children's

Cook Children's Health Care System embraces an inspiring Promise – to improve the health of every child in our region through the prevention and treatment of illness, disease and injury. Based in Fort Worth, Texas, we're proud of our long and rich tradition of serving our community.

Our not-for-profit organization, which employs more than 7,937 employees across nine companies – a medical center, two surgery centers, a physician network, home health services and a health plan. It also includes Child Study Center at Cook Children's, Cook Children's Health Services Inc., and Cook Children's Health Foundation. With more than 60 primary, specialty and urgent care locations throughout Texas, families can access our top-ranked specialty programs and network of services to meet their unique needs.

We've worked to improve the health of children from across our primary service area of Denton, Hood, Johnson, Parker, Tarrant and Wise counties for more than 100 years. Based on the exceptional care we provide, patients travel to Cook Children's from around the country and the globe to receive life-saving pediatric care built on leading technology, extraordinary collaboration and the art of caring.

For more information, visit cookchildrens.org.

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