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City of Duluth - Communications Office

411 West First Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-730-5230 | www.duluthmn.gov | Emily Larson, Mayor

For more information contact Pakou Ly, Public Information Coordinator 218-730-5309

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SUBJECT: Duluth Mayor Announces Carl Crawford as New Human Rights Officer

BY: Pakou Ly, Communications Office

Duluth Mayor Announces Carl Crawford as New Human Rights Officer

[Duluth, MN] - Mayor Emily Larson announced today that Lake Superior College's Inter-cultural Center Coordinator Carl Crawford is her choice to become Duluth's new Human Rights Officer.

"Carl shares my commitment to engage the community in addressing systemic barriers to opportunity. He combines a lifelong passion for fairness with ten years of professional experience working to ensure racial justice and human rights for all, and he'll be a powerful partner who can bridge working in the community and in the Administration." announced Mayor Larson.

"He brings years of community work and relationships, can meet people where they are at, and build collaboration across differences," she added.

Larson has made dismantling Duluth's long-standing disparities a cornerstone of her administration. In March, following Bob Grytdahl's retirement, Larson announced that the Human Rights Officer position would be elevated and directly report to her.

"The response was overwhelming, with 60 candidates applying," said Larson. "It was a very competitive pool of candidates, but what Carl brings is the right combination of life experience, personal integrity, and professional knowledge."

Crawford steps into this newly elevated role after serving as Lake Superior College's Intercultural Center Coordinator since 2007. He brings a deep history of community involvement and human rights work to the position, including helping to draft the original Human Rights Ordinance, serving as past chair of the Human Rights Commission and was a founding board member of the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial.

In addition, he has served on numerous Board of Directors, including Community Action Duluth, Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce, Woodland Hills, Men as Peacemakers, the Ordean Foundation, SOAR, NAACP, and American Cancer Society. He is the recipient of the 2012 MLK Jr. Drum Major for Peace Award, is active with the Family Freedom School of Duluth and is a long-time youth and high school basketball coach.

Crawford believes Duluth is at an important and pivotal moment in history. "When you look around the country and you see what is happening, and then look at Duluth and see a community and administration willing to tackle some deep seated and tough issues that hold us back, I see a lot of hope and realize what an incredible and historic opportunity we have here. It's humbling, and exciting," Crawford said.

Crawford is excited to get to work, yet acknowledges the challenge of dismantling persistent barriers and disparities still experienced by some people in Duluth.

"My history has been all about building trusting community relationships. The way we overcome decades of mistrust, skepticism and anger is to reach out, listen deeply, seek understanding, and do the hard work of building authentic relationships. Trust will come when the City leads by example, actively dismantles barriers, and through persistent progress demonstrates that Duluth's next chapter includes everyone," he added.

Rebecca Domagala, current Chair of the Human Rights Commission agreed. "We look forward to addressing the needs of all who call Duluth their "home" and making this beautiful city a more equitable place for all living here. We want this diverse population to feel honored, validated, and that their basic needs and rights are fully met," Domagala said. "We are looking forward to working closely with Carl," she added.

Marcus Jones, Duluth Assistant City Attorney and member of the hiring committee, also is looking forward to working with Carl. "I couldn't be happier with the decision. Carl has a proven record of effective collaboration and community relations. His hiring both improves our cultural competency and recognizes the importance of making city government reflect the population that it serves," said Jones.

Crawford's appointment will go before the City Council for a vote at the July 11 Duluth City Council meeting. Crawford anticipates starting in the position August 1.

The Human Rights Officer serves as the City's staff liaison to the Commission on Disabilities, Human Rights Commission, and the Duluth Citizen Review Board.

Other key duties include educating City staff on their rights and responsibilities relating to human rights policies, leading an update of the City's Affirmative Action and Fair Housing Plans, and developing and administering anti-discrimination programs for the City of Duluth.

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