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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Rotary Club donates cancer-prevention hoods to Flagler County Fire Rescue

**March 26, 2019** – The Rotary Club of Flagler County joined forces with Hoods for Heroes to provide 115 cancer-prevention hoods to firefighters in Flagler Beach and Flagler County.

Donation totals of \$17,000 included matching grants from the Rotary Foundation, Jeff Evans State Farm, and State Farm’s national corporate office.

“Every firefighter in Flagler County will be protected with these hoods,” said Hoods for Heroes founder, Jeff Rountree before the donation became official on Tuesday in a ceremony at the Emergency Operations Center. He noted the City of Palm Coast had already purchased hoods for its firefighters.

Cindy Kiel Evans – president of the Rotary Club of Flagler County and wife of Jeff Evans – choked back tears as she told the story of her firefighter ex-husband who is battling Stage 3 brain cancer after 25 years of service in Cape Kennedy.

“We stayed close – friends,” Kiel Evans said. “I never thought I would watch my adult daughters take care of their father, which is so hard.”

Flagler County Deputy Fire Chief Joe King said the ceremony could have been called “Hoods ‘from’ Heroes,” as not all who deserve the hero moniker wear uniforms.

“This is such an incredible donation,” King said afterwards. “Thyroid cancer is being diagnosed more and more in firefighters, because of the carcinogens we are exposed to and that cling to our uniforms.”

King knows firsthand. He was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 2012, and had surgery to remove the gland and three affected lymph nodes the following year. Doctors determined he was “clear” last May.

“I was at a conference and got a Life Scan – an advanced diagnostic test – and it found my cancer,” King said. “I would have never known to look for it.”

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Charles Ericksen, Jr.  
District 1

Greg Hansen  
District 2

David Sullivan  
District 3

Joe Mullins  
District 4

Donald O’Brien, Jr.  
District 5

According to the International Association of Firefighters, cancer has surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of death. And, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recently undertook two large studies focused on firefighter cancer and concluded that firefighters face a 9 percent increase in cancer diagnoses, and a 14 percent increase in cancer-related deaths, compared to the general population in the U.S.

Flagler County provides annual Life Scan physicals for all of its firefighters. In addition to King, two other Flagler County firefighters have been diagnosed with cancer.

Fire Chief Don Petito was brief in his comments.

“This donation shows that people actually care,” Petito said. “We just want to say thanks.”

Oceanside Beach Bar & Grill provided the food for the luncheon ceremony, which was also greatly appreciated.

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