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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT**

Isabelle Stafford

[isabelle@cstrategies.com](mailto:isabelle@cstrategies.com)

720-854-5929

**Mayor Lori Lightfoot Joins Smita Shah, Chair of the Sister Cities of Chicago Delhi Committee, for Annual Lunch Honoring Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and Proclaims October 2nd as**

**Mahatma Gandhi Day in Chicago**

*Senator Dick Durbin joins Mayor and other dignitaries at Fifth Annual Delhi Committee of*

*Chicago Sister Cities International Luncheon to honor Gandhi’s enduring legacy of non-violence*

**CHICAGO, IL –** Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Senator Dick Durbin, World Business Chicago CEO Andrea Zopp and First Lady Amy Eshelman joined Chicago Sister Cities International Delhi Committee Chair Smita Shah at this year’s annual Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi luncheon, marking its fifth year of honoring the man who inspired civil rights movements across the globe. At the event, Mayor Lightfoot also issued a proclamation naming October 2nd Mahatma Gandhi Day in Chicago in recognition of the 150th anniversary of his birth and in acknowledgement of his long lasting legacy and the deep roots of the Indian culture here in Chicago.

“This is truly an honor for the Indian-American community here in Chicago and for me personally,” said Smita Shah, President and CEO of SPANN Tech, a construction and engineering management firm and founder of the Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi luncheon. “This idea grew out of a recognition that Chicago is composed of many communities, and that we have to honor all and exclude none. This program allows us to recognize the Indian Community of Chicago, and through Mahatma Gandhi, consider how we can all have an impact on improving lives by working together.”

Delhi’s position as a sister city to Chicago demonstrates the strong relationship between India and the city as well as the cultural importance of the established Indian-American community to the Chicagoland community. Under Shah’s leadership, the Delhi Committee of Chicago founded the Annual Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi Luncheon in 2014,honoring the long-standing exchange of ideas between Mahatma Gandhi and the U.S., and the ever important principles of truth and non-violence.

Proclamation language attached below:

***OFFICE OF THE MAYOR***

***CITY OF CHICAGO***

***LORI E. LIGHTFOOT***

*MAYOR*

*PROCLAMATION*

*WHEREAS, October 2, 2019 marks the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi; and*

*WHEREAS, Gandhi is revered the world over for his nonviolent philosophy of passive resistance and as an advocate for all people, including the poor and disenfranchised, championing the causes of education, economic opportunity, and equality amongst all; and*

*WHEREAS, Gandhi is often named among the 20th century's most important figures, and remains admired in India as a father of the nation proving that one man has the power to take on an empire, using both intelligence and ethics to make an impact on today's world and showing the importance of resolving differences through peaceful means; and*

*WHEREAS, Gandhi had a close connection to many Americans and drew inspiration from Henry David Thoreau's essay on the “Duty of Civil Disobedience,” which had a great deal to do in shaping Gandhi's own thinking on the subject and to him influencing several African American leaders such as Howard Thurman, Benjamin Mays, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and*

*WHEREAS, Chicago takes pride in its tradition of welcoming and celebrating international communities and their customs and shares a long history of friendship with the people of India, beginning in 1893 when Swami Vivekananda, a young philosopher, author, and monk, attended the World Parliament of Religions at the Columbian Exposition; and*

*WHEREAS, Chicago is home to a vibrant and energetic Indian American community that has made vital contributions to the development of Chicago throughout its history and continues to play an important role in the life of our city and because of these strong ties, the City of Chicago has enjoyed a sister city relationship with Delhi, India since 2001; and*

*WHEREAS, Chicago Sister Cities International, an initiative of World Business Chicago, works to advance Chicago as a global city and promotes peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation through citizen diplomacy – one individual, one community at a time – for the benefit of Chicago and its sister cities; and*

*WHEREAS, founded in 2014 by the Delhi Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International, under the leadership of Smita Shah, the Annual Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi Luncheon honors Gandhi's lasting contributions and inspires us all to follow the example left by him:*

*NOW, THEREFORE, I, LORI E. LIGHTFOOT, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO, do hereby proclaim October 2, 2019 to be MAHATMA GANDHI DAY IN CHICAGO in recognition of the important legacy of Mahatma Gandhi.*

*Dated this 20th day of September, 2019.*

***About The Delhi Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International***

Chicago Sister Cities International is a division of World Business Chicago and is committed to building bridges and sharing ideas between Chicago and its international communities and partners. It celebrates cooperation and understanding through citizen diplomacy while promoting cross cultural arts and tourism, global education, international business and government exchange. Smita Shah joined Chicago Sister Cities International and became Chair of the Delhi Committee as she believes it is a way to continue Chicago’s global leadership and honor the diverse communities that make up the city.

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