



*LeadingAge*<sup>™</sup>  
*Michigan*

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**MEMBER AWARDS**

★ **GALA** ★

**Tuesday, April 28, 2026**

A healthcare worker in blue scrubs is smiling and looking at an elderly man with white hair and glasses. The man is using a walker and is wearing a grey jacket over a blue shirt. They are in a well-lit room with a window in the background.

**Omnicare**<sup>®</sup>  
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# Your Partner for Quality Care

Our operational excellence and robust clinical expertise support your mission to provide the best care possible.

# Welcome to the 2026 Member Awards Gala!

The Member Awards Gala is our opportunity to recognize and honor individuals and groups who embody excellence in leadership, service, and innovation, and who have made outstanding contributions to their communities. During the Gala, we celebrate stories of individuals and group employees, volunteers, programs, and organizations that have made a difference in the lives of others – differences for both residents and staff.

Thank you for joining us for this special conference event that is focused this year on managing the rapid pace of a continuously changing industry, with the understanding that these individuals and groups are the absolute core of our mission and service to seniors. The Gala provides an opportunity where we can break away from our daily routine and appreciate the diligence and hard work that these awardees have given, along with our workforce who transform shared beliefs and hopes into action.

During this event, we recognize the value of the time and talent our workers and volunteers provide to our communities. Let's celebrate together.

Sincerely,



Baruch Senior Ministries  
Board Chair - LeadingAge Michigan

## Program

5:00 pm - *\*Award Winner Photos*

6:00 pm - Cocktail Reception

6:30 pm - Doors open

*\*All award winners are encouraged to take a formal photo with their award before the reception*



## **EMCEE Highlight**

Meet our host for the evening,  
Jack York, Founder of iN2L  
and TaleGate!

## **Thank you to our 2026 Member Awards Committee Members**

*In loving memory of Julie Deppner –  
Heritage Community of Kalamazoo*

Kathy Russell – Chelsea Retirement Community

Amanda VanDerKlok – Holland Home

Chase Cox – Functional Pathways

Brenda Carney – CSI Support & Development

Julianne Sinde – CCL Hospitality Group

LeadingAge MI Staff Liaison – Caitlin Gregory

# 2026 Member Award Categories

## Life Member

The Life Member Award acknowledges a distinguished individual who has made significant contributions to the field of aging services and has created a lasting and meaningful legacy. The nominee(s) must have worked for a LeadingAge Michigan member and has retired from such employment.

## Business Partner of the Year

The Business Partner of the Year Award recognizes an organization providing products and services to senior care providers, has demonstrated unwavering support and active engagement with the association, and has shown continuous commitment to our members and the senior care industry.

## Chair Citation

The LeadingAge Michigan Chair Citation Award honors an individual identified as having a significant impact on senior care through Michigan policy, legislative development, or service.

## MVP

The MVP award is open to any LeadingAge Michigan Member or Business Partner with a track record of at least 15 years of dedicated service, demonstrating their loyalty and a lasting, valuable impact in aging services.

## Nominator's Choice

This award is designed to be more flexible, to recognize an individual who may not fit into the existing award categories but still deserves the spotlight. Nominators were able to invent a custom title that best defines and celebrates what makes the individual stand out.

## Emerging Leader

The Emerging Leader Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated an aptitude for, and commitment to, professional growth as a leader.

## Servant's Heart

The Servant's Heart Award spotlights individuals whose compassion, empathy, and unwavering kindness consistently makes a difference.

# 2026 Member Award Categories

## Operational Excellence

The Operational Excellence Award recognizes individuals whose behind-the-scenes dedication drives day-to-day success and supports everyone around them. Whether in HR, administration, or an operations-focused role, these individuals are the backbone of the organization.

## Exceptional Leadership

The Exceptional Leadership Award is dedicated to strong leaders in aging services whose dedication and professionalism elevate the work environment while making a meaningful difference within the larger community.

## Empowerment

The Empowerment Award is dedicated to celebrating those who coach, guide, and *empower* others to reach their fullest potential.

## Trustee of the Year

The Trustee of the Year Award recognizes an individual who has served with distinction on the governing board of a LeadingAge Michigan member organization and made an outstanding contribution to the well-being of seniors, the employees who serve them, and the organization's mission.

## Volunteer of the Year

The Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes individual or group volunteers, auxiliaries, or organizations working within a member community who have provided extraordinary service to seniors.

## Mission in Motion

This **group** award celebrates programs or services within the LeadingAge Michigan membership that bring purpose to life in aging services through meaningful action. In short, this initiative is making a real difference!

## Life Members

### David Tiesenga

#### *Holland Home*

Throughout his distinguished career, David has demonstrated visionary leadership, steadfast dedication, and a deep commitment to serving older adults with dignity and compassion.

Under his guidance, Holland Home expanded its reach from serving a small number of seniors to impacting thousands across West Michigan, ensuring generations receive exceptional care, purpose-driven support, and opportunities to thrive.



A collaborative innovator, David played a key role in advancing new models of care, including PACE, Tandem365, and the expansion of Home and Community-Based Services. These efforts have significantly improved access, quality of life, and care delivery for older adults and their families.

David's leadership also extended to public policy, where he was instrumental in the development and passage of important CCRC legislation, creating greater clarity and opportunity for growth across Michigan. His influence has reached nationally as a respected presenter and thought leader, helping to shape the future of aging services and elevate Michigan's nonprofit providers.

In recognition of four decades of extraordinary leadership and service, we honor David Tiesenga for the lasting impact he has made on the lives of older adults, the strength of our communities, and the future of aging services. With deep gratitude, we celebrate a career defined by purpose, innovation, and compassion.

## Life Members

### **Randy Gasser** *Woodhaven Retirement Community*

Randy Gasser's career is a remarkable testament to visionary leadership, steady innovation, and a deep commitment to the well-being of older adults. Over more than 30 years in aging services, Randy has not only witnessed the evolution of the field—he has helped shape it.



As President and Chief Executive Officer of Woodhaven Retirement Community, Randy consistently looked ahead, bringing new models of care to life. From overseeing the construction of an early assisted living community in the 1980s, to launching one of Michigan's first seven-day senior adult day programs and secured memory support centers in the 1990s, to expanding rehabilitation and long-term care services in the 2000s, his leadership has always been grounded in meeting the changing needs of seniors with dignity and foresight. His work continued to evolve with the development of a second campus in Bay City and, most recently, a transformative repositioning featuring state-of-the-art amenities and innovative care environments.

Randy's professional accomplishments are matched by his personal character. As Michigan's first credentialed Health Care Executive, a licensed Nursing Home Administrator, and a CPA in both Michigan and Ohio, he brought rigor and excellence to every aspect of his work. Yet those who know Randy best will speak first of his kindness, his steady optimism, and his habit of beginning each day by leading devotion, creating a sense of community and purpose for residents, staff, and all who walked through Woodhaven's doors.

His impact extends far beyond his organization. Randy has been a dedicated and thoughtful leader within LeadingAge Michigan, serving on the Board of Directors, Current Chair of Senior Care Resources, contributing to both the Public Policy and Member Dues Taskforces, and helping guide the association through meaningful change. As a coach in the Assisted Living Certification Program, he has mentored and inspired the next generation of leaders, leaving an imprint that will carry forward for years to come.

Randy Gasser is, in every sense, a true servant leader and a friend to all. His influence on the mission and vision of LeadingAge Michigan and on the lives of countless seniors and professionals is lasting and profound.

It is with deep respect and gratitude that we honor Randy with the Life Member Award, recognizing a legacy defined not only by achievement, but by heart.

## Life Members

### **Kathleen Reed**

#### ***Dykema Gossett***

Kathleen Reed, attorney and long and trusted friend to LeadingAge Michigan, has retired from Dykema Gossett. We thank her for her assistance over the years in supporting our members and the Association through complex regulatory and reimbursement issues.



Through her more than 36 years with Dykema Gossett, she has delivered practical and informed guidance during a time of increasing regulatory and financial burden. She has worked with a broad range of healthcare providers, including hospitals, pharmacies, home health agencies, hospices, nursing homes, medical equipment suppliers, and individual practitioners. Her work has covered many facets of healthcare law, with particular emphasis on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, pharmacy and drug control issues, fraud and abuse compliance, license and regulatory matters, scope of practice issues, and patient care.

Long recognized by her peers and active within her community, she was recognized in the Best Lawyers in America and named 'Lawyer of the Year' for Healthcare Law. She has also served as a trustee on the Board of Education for the Public Schools of Petoskey, and as co-chair of the local Child Abuse Prevention Council, among many other volunteer activities.

However, we most want to thank Kathleen for her steadfast and ongoing support to the Association. As both nurse and lawyer, she has been able to fully understand the issues facing our members. And we will miss her calm, thoughtful approach to problem solving in one of the most highly regulated industries. We wish you well, Kathleen!

## Life Members

### Deanna Mitchell

#### *LeadingAge Michigan*

Deanna Mitchell's career reflects exceptional dedication, expertise, and an unwavering commitment to advancing aging services across Michigan. As Senior Vice President for Health Policy and Integrated Systems, she has shaped innovative care models and guided members through an ever-evolving healthcare landscape.



Over more than 20 years with LeadingAge Michigan, Deanna's influence has been profound. Her sharp analysis and clear communication have informed policy, strengthened members, and elevated the voice of aging services statewide.

Her leadership was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a time of uncertainty, Deanna provided clarity and consistency delivering more than 500 newsletters, 130 webinars, and countless hours of direct support to members navigating unprecedented challenges.

A recipient of the Chair Award in 2021, Deanna has played a pivotal role in shaping both association priorities and state policy, ensuring older adults and those who serve them remain front and center.

To her colleagues, she is a trusted resource, respected leader, and invaluable teammate. While her daily role is concluding, her connection to our work will continue through special projects, extending her lasting impact.

It is with deep appreciation that we honor Deanna Mitchell with the Life Member Award.

## Business Partner of the Year

It is both an honor and a pleasure to recognize this year's Business Partner of the Year an award that reflects not just professional excellence, but a deep and enduring commitment to the mission we all share serving older adults with integrity, compassion, and innovation.

This year, we proudly recognize **Plante Moran**, an organization that has consistently demonstrated unwavering support for LeadingAge Michigan and our members. But behind this recognition is something even more meaningful—the relationships, trust, and the people who bring that commitment to life every single day. In many ways, this award reflects one individual whose dedication has made a lasting impact across our membership, Jon Lanczak.



plante moran

Jon has long been more than a consultant to our field—he is a trusted friend, a steady advisor, and an invaluable resource to countless providers navigating an increasingly complex healthcare environment. As a partner in Plante Moran's Senior Care & Living consulting group, Jon brings not only deep technical expertise in reimbursement, cost reporting, benchmarking, and operational improvement, but also a genuine passion for helping organizations succeed.

His presence is felt throughout our association. Whether leading insightful discussions at SNF Finance and Strategy Days, guiding members through regulatory changes, or sharing his expertise at our Annual Conference, Jon shows up consistently, generously, and with purpose. He has a remarkable ability to translate complexity into clarity, always with the goal of strengthening the organizations and people he serves.

But what truly sets Jon and the entire Plante Moran team apart is their commitment beyond the work itself. They are also deeply invested in our members, and proactive in helping us stay ahead of the challenges and opportunities facing senior care. This award recognizes that spirit of partnership. It honors not only the expertise Plante Moran brings, but the authentic, values-driven engagement that defines their relationship with LeadingAge Michigan.

On behalf of our entire association, we extend our sincere gratitude and congratulations to Jon Lanczak, Plante Moran, and the entire team. Your dedication makes a difference every day, and our field is stronger because of it.

## Chair Citation

### In memoriam of Julie Deppner

LeadingAge Michigan is honored to recognize Julie Deppner, a beloved friend, colleague, educator and leader for the Chair Citation Award.



Julie was a respected and mission-driven leader in the aging services field. She served as President & CEO of Heritage Community of Kalamazoo beginning in 2024, following eight years as CEO of Silver Maples in Chelsea. Prior to entering aging services, Julie held a distinguished career in public education, including service as assistant superintendent for the Chelsea School District from 2012-2016.

Julie was deeply engaged with LeadingAge Michigan, where she served as a mentor in the Leadership Academy and as a member of the Awards Committee. She was widely known for her ability to build meaningful relationships, lead with integrity, and bring warmth and encouragement to colleagues across the sector.

Julie's leadership, kindness, and genuine care for others left a lasting mark on the aging services community. She led with both heart and purpose, uplifting those around her and strengthening the organizations she served. Her presence, wisdom, and warmth will be greatly missed throughout the aging services community.

This award honors our dear friend and her extraordinary dedication to LeadingAge Michigan. Her legacy endures and will never be forgotten.

## **Carrie Baldwin**

### ***Physical Therapist***

#### ***Grand Traverse Pavilions***



Carrie Baldwin has dedicated 23 years to the Grand Traverse Pavilions (GTP) Outpatient Wellness Center, where she has been instrumental since its opening in 2002. Specializing in aquatic therapy, she helped design the therapy pool and develop innovative programs that have enriched services and transformed clients' lives. Originally working at an aquatic therapy center in Texas, a spontaneous opportunity brought her back to Northern Michigan, where her lasting connection with GTP began.

As a staff physical therapist, Carrie is passionate about hands-on, one-on-one care. She has worked across long-term care and outpatient settings but finds her greatest fulfillment in building meaningful relationships and witnessing clients' progress over time, some spanning decades. She values direct patient care over management, believing her purpose lies in helping individuals heal and regain independence.

Deeply rooted in community, Carrie's own family has experienced GTP's services across four generations. Outside of work, she enjoys kayaking, gardening, and time with loved ones. She remains committed to compassionate, relationship-centered care that creates a lasting ripple effect of healing and trust.

**MVP**

## **Pamela Latovick**

### ***VP of Reimbursement and Compliance Trinity Health Senior Communities***



Pam Latovick is widely respected across Trinity Health Senior Communities (THSC) for her integrity, institutional knowledge, compassion, and tireless work ethic. As Vice President for Reimbursement and Compliance, she has spent more than 25 years advocating for fair reimbursement while navigating complex and ever-changing state and federal regulations. Though her role centers on finance and compliance, Pam views her work as serving a higher purpose: ensuring quality care for vulnerable elders.

Colleagues describe her as the organization's "go-to" person: knowledgeable, responsive, and always willing to help with enthusiasm and kindness. Her impact extends far beyond her job description. She contributes to strategic planning, grant applications, employee engagement, culture initiatives, and resident advocacy. Pam's person-centered approach reflects her deep commitment to the well-being of residents, families, and staff alike.

Known for her humility and warmth, she even brings joy to administrative tasks, sharing self-written poems to engage colleagues. A passionate champion of THSC's Mission and Core Values, Pam not only supports the organization's legacy—she embodies it, inspiring others through her example and unwavering belief in the work they do.

## **Matthew Keller**

***Physical Therapist***

***EHM Senior Solutions***



“Matt Keller didn’t just help my husband walk again, he gave him his life back.” That single sentence, shared by a grateful family, perfectly captures who Matt Keller, PT is: a clinician whose compassion and expertise transform not only physical outcomes, but entire lives.

Reliable and fully present, Matt brings calm reassurance to every home visit, empowering patients and families to believe in progress. Over the past year alone, he has helped more than 120 older adults regain strength and independence after injury or illness. His influence extends beyond individual care; he played a key role in developing EHM’s fall prevention initiative, improving safety and reducing falls across the program.

Matt’s dedication shines in personal moments- walking step by step with a fearful patient until she regained the confidence to walk independently again. He also mentors new therapists, modeling leadership rooted in empathy and excellence.

Humble and results-driven, Matt celebrates every milestone, big or small. He embodies the spirit of the MVP Award through skill, heart, and an unwavering belief that every older adult deserves the opportunity to thrive.

# Nominator's Choice "The Make it Happen Award"

## Abby Waldo

*VP of Innovation and  
Project Implementation*

*Resthaven*



Abby Waldo exemplifies "make it happen" leadership at Resthaven. Since joining in 2018, she has transformed ideas into action with creativity, grit, and operational excellence. From pioneering Resthaven's first Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist role to helping launch a new Independent Living community, and now serving as Vice President of Innovation and Project Implementation, Abby consistently advances the organization's mission.

She thrives in complex initiatives, bringing structure and collaboration to ambitious projects. Abby co-led the research and rollout of the Certified Medication Aide pilot in the skilled nursing facility, ensuring a smooth implementation. She spearheaded Resthaven's dementia care model, leading a cross-disciplinary task force and training all 465 team members while continuing to guide dementia-support efforts.

Abby also drives thoughtful technology integration, piloting innovations such as fall detection, MDS automation, and AI solutions. Her grant leadership has strengthened workforce pipelines, expanded dementia programming, and supported strategic technology planning.

Recently accepted into the 2026 National Leadership Academy, Abby continues to expand her knowledge and leadership while bringing fresh insight back to our community. Her blend of determination, creativity, and operational excellence makes her the perfect recipient of The Make It Happen Award.

## Emerging Leader

### Dante Owens

#### *Chef Manager*

#### *Porter Hills Village, Brio Living Services*

Dante Owens, Chef Manager at Brio Living Services' Porter Hills Village, is exceptionally deserving of LeadingAge Michigan's Emerging Leader Award. Hired nearly two years ago to oversee dining for Assisted Living, Memory Care, and Health Center residents, Dante brought fine-dining experience from downtown Grand Rapids along with discipline, creativity, and high culinary standards.



Under his leadership, the kitchen team has become more cohesive while elevating food quality and maintaining costs below budget. He fosters a respectful, growth-oriented culture where team members feel supported. Longtime cook Marlene Kline notes that Dante greets staff daily, ensures they have what they need, works alongside them when short-staffed, and always follows through on his commitments.

Residents also praise Dante's personable approach. He regularly visits tables, welcomes feedback, and introduces innovative menu options that enhance the dining experience. Known for special touches like made-to-order omelets and crepes, he creates moments of joy while prioritizing satisfaction.

Respected by staff and residents alike, Dante exemplifies integrity, leadership, and service excellence, making him a rising star with a bright future ahead.

## Emerging Leader

### Benjamin Harmon

*General Manager*

*Trinity Health Senior Communities,  
Marycrest*



Ben Harmon is a dynamic leader whose nearly four years as General Manager of Marycrest in Livonia have driven remarkable growth and transformation. Serving both Independent Living and Assisted Living residents within Trinity Health Senior Communities, Ben led a major expansion culminating in the 2025 Grand Opening of the Estates at Marycrest. Under his guidance, the Assisted Living program grew from 24 to 84 residents, alongside significant renovations to enhance the campus.

Ben fosters a culture of servant leadership, approaching challenges with openness and a deep commitment to residents, families, and staff. He pioneered the organization's first Mission Fair to connect frontline colleagues more closely to Trinity Health's Mission and Core Values. He also collaborated with the Livonia community to develop respite programs supporting residents recovering from hospital or nursing home stays.

A creative and forward-thinking influencer, Ben actively engages residents in leadership groups and decision-making processes, expanding services to meet evolving needs. Known for his authenticity, warmth, and business acumen, he earns trust across his team and the broader community. Ben's vision and dedication position him as a rising leader making a lasting impact.

## Emerging Leader

### April Hurst

*Life Enrichment Manager*

*Chelsea Retirement Community, Brio Living Services*



April Hurst, Life Enrichment Manager at Brio Living Services' Chelsea Retirement Community (CRC), is a dedicated leader with more than 20 years of service. She began her career in Dining Services, advanced into caregiving, and later became a Life Enrichment Assistant before recently being promoted to lead Assisted Living and Memory Care programming. Within just two months in her new role, she earned Brio's "Heart of the Community" award for fostering connection, inclusion, and meaningful relationships.

April excels at meeting residents, especially those living with dementia, exactly where they are, adapting programs to their abilities and encouraging her team to focus on strengths rather than limitations. Her creativity shines through initiatives like a jewelry-making class where residents crafted wearable art from Petoskey stones, promoting pride, engagement, and social connection.

Colleagues describe her as resilient, compassionate, and a natural leader who uplifts both residents and staff. She also supports families with empathy, even guiding them through memorial planning with calm care. Through art, shared experiences, and heartfelt presence, April cultivates community and embodies Brio's mission daily with warmth and purpose.

# Servant's Heart

## Deborah Erke

*Administrative Assistant for EVS*

*Chelsea Retirement Community, Brio Living Services*



Deb Erke, Administrative Assistant for Chelsea Retirement Community's Environmental Services (EVS) team, exemplifies selfless service and compassion, making her a deserving nominee for the Servant's Heart Award. As the key support for the EVS team, Deb goes beyond administrative duties- helping guide operations with care and attention to ensure residents live in clean, safe, and welcoming environments. Recently recognized with Brio Living Services' "Standing Ovation Award," she transforms everyday tasks into meaningful acts of kindness that strengthen team connection and community spirit.

Deb is known for prioritizing others in every interaction, quietly offering extra time and support to residents, colleagues, and families. She plays a vital role in boosting team morale through appreciation events, celebrations, and gatherings that help staff feel valued and supported.

Her servant leadership extends into community involvement, including organizing fundraising efforts for the Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's and coordinating events like the CRC Cruise-In car show. Deb leads by example, working alongside her team with humility and dedication. Through her generosity, reliability, and unwavering kindness, Deb creates a culture where everyone feels seen, supported, and inspired.

# Servant's Heart

## Renee Gray

### *Housekeeper*

### *Silver Maples of Chelsea*



Renee, a member of the Silver Maples of Chelsea housekeeping team since 2023, exemplifies compassion and service through her everyday interactions with residents and colleagues. Known for her calming presence and genuine kindness, Renee approaches her work with pride and purpose, consistently going beyond expectations to ensure residents feel comfortable, respected, and cared for.

Shortly after residents move in, Renee personally meets with them to learn their preferences and build meaningful connections. Her attentiveness to small but important details, such as how a blanket is folded or when someone may need extra conversation-helps residents feel truly known and valued. One resident shared that Renee “doesn’t wait to be asked; she simply notices, cares, and acts.”

Demonstrating remarkable initiative, Renee independently created personalized housekeeping binders for each resident to document preferences, improving satisfaction, safety, and service consistency while boosting team morale. Her dedication inspires coworkers, who often note her willingness to help and her strong attention to detail.

Through humility, warmth, and unwavering care, Renee embodies a true servant’s heart, enriching daily life and strengthening the sense of community at Silver Maples.

# Servant's Heart

## Brooke Doyle

*Field Nurse*

*EHM Senior Solutions*



Brooke Doyle exemplifies compassionate nursing, combining exceptional clinical expertise with a remarkable ability to connect deeply with patients, families, and colleagues. Her care extends beyond medical treatment, creating comfort, trust, and hope in even the most challenging moments. Patients often describe her presence as calming and reassuring, with one sharing that “when Brooke walks through the door, it feels like hope has arrived.”

Brooke consistently goes above and beyond for those she serves. During a severe winter storm, she borrowed a truck to reach a homebound patient needing urgent care, remaining for hours to ensure safety and comfort. She also supports families emotionally, helping them navigate difficult transitions such as hospice care while fostering meaningful connections between patients and loved ones.

Beyond patient care, Brooke is a respected mentor who models excellence for new nurses and home health aides, shaping a culture of empathy and professionalism. Her leadership contributed to a fall prevention initiative that reduced patient falls by 27 percent, improving safety across the organization.

A true servant leader, Brooke restores dignity, empowers families, and inspires others through compassionate, person-centered care.

# Servant's Heart

## Kathy Wickey

*Nurse*

*Thurston Woods Village*



Kathy Wickey has served as a nurse at Thurston Woods Village since September 2020, beginning her career during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when many were leaving the profession. Her decision to step into nursing during such a challenging period reflects her dedication and commitment to resident care. Over the past five years, Kathy has become known as a passionate advocate for quality care, consistently demonstrating professionalism, empathy, and strong clinical judgment.

Residents and families frequently praise Kathy for her warmth and attentiveness. One family member shared that she makes every person feel like they are her sole focus, while residents openly celebrate her skill and compassion. Leadership also recognizes her reliability and teamwork. Director of Nursing Virginia Jordan highlights Kathy's clinical awareness, follow-through, and willingness to support fellow nurses and CNAs whenever needed.

Kathy's impact extends beyond skilled nursing. Often working second shift without management onsite, she steps in to assist assisted living, memory care, and independent living residents, ensuring safety across the entire community. Her willingness to help wherever needed reflects a true servant's heart and unwavering dedication to those she serves.

# Servant's Heart

## **Averielle "Ava" Garcia**

***Certified Nurse's Aide &  
Medication Technician***

***Trinity Health Senior Communities,  
Bellbrook***



Ava Garcia exemplifies the true meaning of a servant's heart through her compassion, humility, and unwavering dedication to others.

As a Certified Nurse's Aide and Medication Technician, Ava combines strong clinical skills with remarkable emotional intelligence, ensuring residents' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are met with dignity and respect.

Ava's impact is felt in everyday moments of kindness. She listens attentively, supports colleagues through challenges, and advocates for individuals whose voices may otherwise go unheard. Her caring nature creates a sense of comfort and belonging for residents and team members alike. Rather than seeking recognition, Ava consistently chooses patience, empathy, and understanding in all she does.

Residents describe her as joyful and uplifting, noting how she goes the extra mile in simple yet meaningful ways-whether fulfilling small requests or bringing happiness through singing and dancing. Her work reflects a deep sense of calling, rooted in service and love for others.

Through quiet devotion and genuine care, Ava brings peace, connection, and positivity to those around her. Her consistent kindness and selfless service make her truly deserving of The Servant's Heart Award.

# Operational Excellence

## Jennifer Staniszewski

*Executive Director of  
Residential Operations*

*Jewish Senior Life of  
Metropolitan Detroit*



Jennifer exemplifies operational excellence, compassionate leadership, and unwavering dedication at Jewish Senior Life of Metropolitan Detroit (JSL). She stepped into a significant leadership role in December 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating resilience and courage while guiding complex operations during an unprecedented time. Beginning as Campus Administrator overseeing two affordable living communities serving 350 residents, Jennifer's strategic vision and empathetic approach quickly led to expanded responsibility across all independent living, assisted living, and memory care communities, impacting more than 750 residents and over 300 staff members.

Jennifer's leadership is measured not only by organizational success but by the leaders she develops. She actively mentors colleagues, empowering others to grow while remaining a trusted advisor and resource. Her data-driven mindset ensures thoughtful decision-making that strengthens operations while keeping resident care at the center.

She also led the agency-wide implementation of Red Carpet Customer Service training, significantly enhancing staff engagement and resident satisfaction. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and accountability across campuses, Jennifer has strengthened organizational alignment and culture. Her steady leadership, mentorship, and commitment to excellence continue to elevate JSL and inspire those around her.

# Operational Excellence

## **Anthony Falsetta**

### ***Purchasing Supervisor***

### ***Heritage Community of Kalamazoo***

Anthony Falsetta, Purchasing Supervisor at Heritage, plays a vital behind-the-scenes role in supporting daily operations across seven communities spanning 26 acres. Managing up to 20 deliveries each day, Anthony ensures that essential supplies, from personal care items to facility equipment, are delivered efficiently and reliably to Independent Living, Assisted Living, and Skilled Nursing areas. His organization, attention to detail, and deep understanding of each community's needs keep operations running smoothly.



Beyond logistics, Anthony is known for his warmth, positivity, and genuine care for others. His approachable nature and willingness to listen make him a trusted resource for residents and staff alike. A lifelong learner, he continuously seeks ways to improve processes and make strategic decisions that benefit the organization.

Anthony also demonstrates exceptional financial stewardship, saving Heritage more than \$20,000 in the past year through thoughtful vendor negotiations and cost-saving initiatives, including improved laundry supply contracts and furniture procurement for Skilled Nursing. Supporting senior leaders, leadership teams, and over 200 care workers, Anthony's systems ensure inventory accuracy and operational efficiency. His dedication, innovation, and collaborative spirit make him an invaluable leader and deserving award recipient.

# Operational Excellence

## Colette Myers

### *Supply Chain Coordinator*

### *Porter Hills Village, Brio Living Services*



Colette Myers, Supply Chain Coordinator at Brio Living Services' Porter Hills Village, exemplifies operational excellence through her dedication, efficiency, and strong stewardship of organizational resources. A team member for nearly 14 years and recent recipient of Brio's Faithful Steward Award, Colette manages Central Supply operations serving more than 400 residents and 250 team members. She oversees inventory ranging from medical and clinical supplies to office materials while collaborating closely with clinical, housekeeping, and environmental services teams and coordinating with hundreds of vendors annually.

Known as a highly reliable and self-motivated professional, Colette consistently balances quality with cost efficiency, ensuring the community receives the best products at responsible prices. Her proactive leadership includes organizing and maintaining OSHA-compliant Safety Data Sheets on a shared platform and improving inventory practices by reducing expired chemical waste across campus.

Colette also demonstrates exceptional responsiveness, quickly sourcing replacement products during national supply recalls to ensure uninterrupted resident care. Beyond her operational expertise, she is valued for her kindness, patience, and supportive teamwork. Through organization, innovation, and thoughtful collaboration, Colette strengthens daily operations while promoting responsible resource management, making her a more than deserving recipient for the Operational Excellence Award.

# Exceptional Leadership

## Rich Acho

CEO

### *Lourdes Senior Community*



Rich exemplifies mission-driven leadership through his steadfast commitment to empowering both residents and staff. He fosters an environment where seniors feel respected, valued, and supported in making meaningful choices about their lives. A powerful example is Lourdes' recent partnership with Angela Hospice to open a 15-bed hospice residence, expanding access to compassionate, specialized end-of-life care and ensuring dignity for residents and their families.

Since stepping into the CEO role in 2022 after serving as CFO, Rich has strengthened a culture rooted in professional growth and operational excellence. He is currently advancing the Villas at Lourdes Senior Community, a state-of-the-art independent living community designed to meet evolving needs. Additionally, he successfully led efforts to secure zoning approval for 60 new independent living apartments, demonstrating perseverance and strategic vision.

Beyond campus, Rich's collaborative leadership and transparency have positively influenced the broader Detroit nonprofit healthcare community, creating a lasting impact across Michigan.

# Exceptional Leadership

## Cathy Campbell

*Director of Dining Services*

*Chelsea Retirement Community,  
Brio Living Services*



Since 2019, Cathy has overseen dining across CRC's full continuum of care, including independent living, assisted living, memory care, and skilled nursing-managing budget, staffing, sanitation, and overall satisfaction while leading chefs and dining managers campus-wide.

Cathy elevates dining into a meaningful part of resident life. Even during staffing challenges, she ensures exceptional food and service, leading by example and inspiring her team daily. Under Brio's Balanced Living initiative, she collaborates with wellness partners to create nutritious, engaging experiences that support the Eight Dimensions of Wellness. She hosts creative quarterly themed events, mystery dinner theaters, and community gatherings that bring joy and connection to residents.

Residents describe her as both an outstanding manager and a friend. Cathy also thoughtfully supports milestone celebrations, including cherished family events. She champions sustainability efforts, partnering with residents to reduce waste and implement eco-friendly practices.

Dedicated and hands-on, Cathy steps in whenever needed and mentors her team with patience and encouragement, fostering both professional growth and a culture of excellence.

# Empowerment

## Heather Renter

*Sr. Director of Resident Life and  
the Memory Care Learning*

*Heritage Community of Kalamazoo*



Heather Renter, Ph.D., gerontologist and Senior Director of Resident Life and the Memory Care Learning Center at Heritage Community of Kalamazoo, is a remarkable recipient for the Empowerment Award. She integrates expertise in gerontology, public health, and intergenerational learning to educate and support residents and caregivers navigating dementia care.

Dr. Renter empowers families through compassionate, individualized guidance. One spouse shared how her thoughtful counsel transformed a difficult visit into a joyful, purpose-filled moment for his wife, restoring connection and dignity. These intentional interventions reflect Dr. Renter's deep understanding of emotional needs and person-centered care.

Drawing on her academic background, she partners with Western Michigan University to mentor doctoral, music therapy, and occupational therapy students, fostering meaningful intergenerational engagement that brings energy and joy to memory care residents. Blending research, professional expertise, and personal insight, Dr. Renter creates safe spaces for learning and healing.

As an age-positive speaker and educator, she extends her impact locally and nationally-continually empowering others while enriching daily life for Heritage residents and families.

# Empowerment

## Christie Vander Meer

*Memory Care Manager*

*Porter Hills Village,  
Brio Living Services*



Christie Vander Meer exemplifies empowerment through compassionate leadership, steady encouragement, and a deep commitment to excellence and community. As Memory Care Manager at Porter Hills Village, she uplifts residents, families, and team members with a patient, solution-focused approach rooted in empathy and respect. She fosters an environment where individuals feel heard, valued, and confident in their abilities.

Families consistently praise Christie's dedication. One daughter shared that after transitioning her mother to memory care, Christie's attentiveness, organization, and guidance provided reassurance and peace of mind during a difficult season. From keeping schedules updated to offering patient support through moments of confusion, Christie ensures residents receive comprehensive, dignified care.

Christie leads with calm confidence, modeling resilience, and positivity. She reframes challenges as growth opportunities, celebrates accomplishments, and cultivates trust among her team. Recognized with Brio Living Services' Wellness Warrior Award, she integrates whole-person wellness into daily practice, encouraging balance and well-being for staff.

Beyond work, Christie coaches youth softball and participates in community sports, mentoring others in teamwork and perseverance. Her influence inspires growth, confidence, and thriving-making her a true embodiment of empowerment.

# Trustee of the Year

## Bill Millard

*Board of Directors*

*Heritage Community of Kalamazoo*



For more than 20 years, Heritage Community of Kalamazoo has benefited tremendously from Bill's steady leadership, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to its mission. Most recently, Bill stepped forward to serve as interim CEO during a critical transition period, offering stability and thoughtful guidance. He consistently provided strategic financial insight throughout master planning efforts, shared trusted counsel while exploring potential partnerships, and served as a reliable sounding board during challenging staffing and census fluctuations. His calm perspective and practical support helped position Heritage to move forward with clarity and confidence.

Bill's dedication to enhancing the lives of older adults has left a lasting mark on the organization's strength and sustainability. His service reflects not only professional expertise but also a deep personal investment in Heritage's success and the well-being of those it serves. As he prepares to retire from the Board in June 2026, recognizing Bill with the Trustee of the Year Award is a meaningful way to honor his decades of commitment, leadership, and impact. He is truly deserving of this recognition!

# Volunteer of the Year

## Mike and Jane Cuba

### *Volunteers*

### *Livonia Care Center, Angela Hospice*



For more than three decades combined, Mike and Jane Cuba have exemplified service, compassion, and community through their devoted volunteerism with Angela Hospice.

Jane began volunteering in 1995 after the hospice cared for her father, intending to serve for just one year. Thirty years later, she continues to offer comfort through respite visits, homemade lap blankets for patients and veterans, baking for teas and holiday gatherings, and supporting memorial events. Her genuine presence and interest in each patient's story create meaningful moments of dignity and connection.

Inspired by Jane, Mike began volunteering in 2011. A lifelong crocheter, he creates thoughtfully designed blankets tailored to individual patients, including veterans. He also teaches Tai Chi twice weekly, promoting balance and mindfulness for residents and staff. As a member of the Ethics Committee, Mike offers a compassionate, patient-centered perspective that enriches thoughtful decision-making.

Together, Mike and Jane quietly serve—cooking, sewing, teaching, and comforting without seeking recognition. Their kindness, humility, and unwavering dedication have touched countless lives. For their enduring compassion and steadfast commitment, they are truly deserving of the 2026 Volunteer of the Year Award.

# Volunteer of the Year

## Howard Brooks

*Resident*

*Silver Maples of Chelsea*



Howard Brooks embodies the heart and spirit of Silver Maples of Chelsea through his selfless service, thoughtful leadership, and quiet acts of kindness that strengthen the entire community. As Treasurer of the Resident Council, Howard brings calm, inclusive leadership that helps ensure residents feel heard and that their ideas lead to meaningful action. He has been instrumental in shaping more effective, resident-centered processes grounded in collaboration and trust.

Howard's impact extends through his service on multiple committees. On the Development Committee, his encouragement and belief in the mission have helped inspire generosity, contributing to more than 65% growth in community giving over the past three years. As the resident representative on the Employee Hardship Fund Committee, Howard approaches sensitive decisions with empathy, fairness, and deep respect for dignity. He also serves on the Scholarship Committee, where he applies a thoughtful, equitable lens and introduced a creative idea-scholarship badge attachments- that increased visibility, pride, and connection across campus.

Beyond committees, Howard improves Silver Maples in tangible ways, from leading safety-related infrastructure projects to repainting signage and crafting professional wayfinding along the wellness path. He also shares his professional expertise through research, presentations, and tools that support staff and residents alike.

Above all, Howard leads with integrity, kindness, and humility. Silver Maples is stronger, warmer, and more connected because of him, making him deeply deserving of the Volunteer of the Year recognition.

# Mission in Motion

## Balanced Living Program

### *Brio Living Services*

Balanced Living is Brio Living Services' signature wellness and lifestyle initiative, launched in 2022 in partnership with the National Institute for Fitness and Sport (NIFS). Designed to enrich life across the full continuum of care, the program integrates physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, and environmental wellness into daily experiences for residents in independent living, assisted living, and long-term care.

The initiative is led by an interdisciplinary campus team spanning dining, engagement, fitness, and spiritual care. Guided by the seven dimensions of wellness, the team develops monthly themes tailored to each level of care—ensuring residents in long-term care receive the same intentional, cohesive programming as those in independent living. This structure fosters collaboration, breaks down departmental silos, and creates a unified lifestyle experience across Brio communities.

Since expanding in 2024, participation in licensed care settings has increased by 22%, with measurable gains in resident satisfaction reflected in Holleran survey results. Balanced Living is now embedded in leadership and strategic goals, reinforcing accountability and long-term impact.

Branded as “Balanced Living powered by NIFS,” the program continues to grow, aligning campuses through FY25 and FY26. It exemplifies innovation, inclusion, and excellence, bringing purpose to life and advancing Brio’s mission in meaningful, measurable ways.



Chelsea  
Retirement  
Community

## Honorable Mentions

We would like to recognize those who were nominated and continuously serve their communities.

### MVP

Kim Husketh

EHM Senior Solutions

Krissy Snyder

EHM Senior Solutions

Greg Arroyo

Heritage Community of Kalamazoo

### Nominator's Choice

Jade Lyons - "The Living the Mission Award"

Trinity Health Senior Communities

Shamaria Canada - "The Wholehearted Caregiver Award"

EHM Senior Solutions

### Emerging Leader

Melissa Guernsey

EHM Senior Solutions

Mason Rinehart

EHM Senior Solutions

Jamie Tacey

Wellspring Lutheran Services

Chris Hinze

Grand Traverse Pavilions

Ty Antkoviak

Grand Traverse Pavilions

Natalia Johnson

Grand Traverse Pavilions

## Servant's Heart

Alyssa Simons	Crawford Continuing Care Center
LaDonna Shier	Wellspring Lutheran Services
Tarik Higgins	Martha T. Berry MCF
Emi Van Hoek	EHM Senior Solutions
Roberto Molina	EHM Senior Solutions
Lataiya Wilson	EHM Senior Solutions
Shaneika Phillips-Shanklin	Heritage Community of Kalamazoo
Joslin Boyd	Grand Traverse Pavilions
Nicki Eason	Grand Traverse Pavilions
Libby Bell	Chelsea Retirement Community, Brio Living Services
Mickey Brasure	Porter Hills Village, Brio Living Services

## Operational Excellence

Julie Lindberg	Trinity Health Senior Communities
Amy Hlavka	EHM Senior Solutions
Lorna Walters	Royal Atrium Inn
Dan Butler	Grand Traverse Pavilions
Lori Bost	Chelsea Retirement Community, Brio Living Services
Kara Roesch	Silver Maples of Chelsea
Brooke Bernthal	Wellspring Lutheran Services
Jim Bielicki	The Cedars of Dexter, Brio Living Services

## Exceptional Leadership

Joshua DeLisle	Trinity Health Senior Communities
Holly Edmondson	Grand Traverse Pavilions
Megan Wojton	Silver Maples of Chelsea
Chip Grover	Silver Maples of Chelsea

## Empowerment

Breanna Scott	Trinity Health Senior Communities
Donita Stokes	Grand Traverse Pavilions

## Trustee of the Year

Mary Marois	Grand Traverse Pavilions
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## Volunteer of the Year

John Entenmann	Trinity Health Senior Communities
Sharon Taylor	EHM Senior Solutions
Victoria Coe	Heritage Community of Kalamazoo
Dalene Blanford	Wellspring Lutheran Services
Cynthia Klingler	Grand Traverse Pavilions
Sturgis High School Key Club	Thurston Woods Village

## Mission in Motion

Glacier Hills Foundation	Trinity Health Senior Communities
U of M Flint Psychology Dept Student Volunteers	Wellspring Lutheran Services, Hospice
Employee- Only Child Care Center	Grand Traverse Pavilions



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