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## LeadingAge Southeast Recognizes the Best in Aging Services at its 61st Annual Convention and Exposition

**TALLAHASSEE**— LeadingAge Southeast recognized outstanding senior living leaders and volunteers during its 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention and Exposition in Orlando. These prestigious awards recognize outstanding organizations and individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of aging services. Recipients were honored for their dedication, innovation, and commitment to enhancing the lives of older adults. This year also marked the first time winners included members from outside of Florida since the association's merger in January.

"We are honored to commend and recognize this year's outstanding award recipients," said LeadingAge Southeast President & CEO Steve Bahmer. "Their unwavering dedication, innovative approaches, and tireless efforts in serving older adults exemplify the highest standards of excellence in our field. Each one of them has made a significant impact, improving the quality of life for those they serve and setting a benchmark for others to follow. We are proud to celebrate their achievements and grateful for their invaluable contributions to their communities."

This year's awards included two prestigious categories that the association does not recognize on an annual basis—[Distinguished Service](#) and [Lifetime Achievement](#), awarded to Ziegler's Rich Scanlon, and LeadingAge Southeast's Mary Ellen Early, respectively.

"Mary Ellen and Rich have been pillars within the senior living community for decades, consistently demonstrating exceptional dedication and passion," Bahmer said. "Their contributions have significantly shaped our association and left an indelible mark on our mission to serve. We are incredibly proud to recognize their outstanding achievements and lasting impact. Their commitment inspires us all to strive for excellence every day."

Award categories and recipients included:

- [Caregiver of the Year](#): Barie Hamilton – Traceway Retirement Community, Tupelo, MS
- [Emerging Leader](#): Minilik Belay – John Knox Village of Florida, Pompano Beach, FL
- [Employee of the Year](#): Louvenia Morgan – Poydras Home, New Orleans, LA
- [Executive of the Year](#): Pam Petsopoulos – Solaris Healthcare, FL

- **Innovation Award**: Elvis Burrows and Patrick Tramontana – The Mayflower, Winter Park, FL
- **Service Coordinator of the Year**: Patricia Walker – Robert Sharp Towers II, Miami, FL
- **Volunteer of the Year**: Helga Howard – Air Force Enlisted Village, Shalimar, FL

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Established in 1963, LeadingAge Southeast is the premier association serving high-quality senior living providers across the continuum of care in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. The Association provides up-to-date regulatory information, a wide variety of educational opportunities, representation before the Legislature and government agencies, group purchasing services, and opportunities for networking with peers to help member communities best serve the needs of older adults.