



March 20, 2008

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Council on Aging honors those who make life better for older adults

Caregivers, volunteers, students and professionals who work to make life better for older adults were honored at the 37th annual dinner of Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio (COA). The dinner was held March 18 at Manor House in Mason, Ohio.

The awards and winners are:

President's Award -

Jacqueline Kebede, outgoing member of the Council on Aging Advisory Council (resident of Finneytown)

Jackie Kebede has devoted her life to community service, helping both children and older adults. She joined Council on Aging's Advisory Council in 2002 when she retired after more than 30 years as a teacher for the Princeton City Schools.

Her service to older adults goes beyond the Council on Aging. As the one who takes care of her 91-year-old aunt, she knows first-hand the challenges and rewards of caregiving. She also helps seniors through Bethel AME Church in Lockland.

Kebede will continue her service as a new member of the Hamilton County Elderly Services Program Advisory Council.

President's Award –

Eli Yovich, outgoing member of the Council on Aging Board of Trustees (resident of Wilmington, OH)

Eli Yovich has devoted countless hours of service to his community. He served five terms on the Wilmington City Council and just completed his second and final term on the Board of Trustees of the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio.

He continues to serve on the boards of Clinton County Community Action Agency and Clinton County Citizens for Elderly Services. He is also active in the Lions Club and his church.

Outstanding Senior Citizen Award – Eugene McClory, Coordinator of the Caregiver Assistance Network for Catholic Social Services of Southwestern Ohio (resident of Ft. Mitchell, KY)

Coordinator of the caregiver program since 1996, McClory plans the annual Caring Matters conference; coordinates 25 caregiver support group sites in seven counties; administers a speaker's bureau that reaches some 2,500 people a year (including making many presentations himself); writes a newsletter for caregivers; and oversees a telephone "care line" that provides information for caregivers.

“Often caregivers experience loneliness, stress and guilt because of the heavy responsibility they bear,” McClory said. “We look to meet their needs to support them.”

Community Service Award – College of Mount St. Joseph students (Career and Experiential Department and Co-Op Department)

Eldermount Adult Day Program and Bayley Place Retirement Community have a mutually beneficial partnership with the College of Mount St. Joseph. The partnership provides work opportunities for students and needed services for older adults.

Currently, students give 77 hours a week, performing a variety of tasks. The students are in co-op, work-study and internship programs at the college. A co-op student helps with marketing and community relations, while others help with events and activities for older adults.

Many students stay with the program until they graduate. One was hired by Eldermount after her graduation and two now work for Council on Aging. Several have changed their career choices to include working with seniors.

“The future of elderly services rests with today’s students. It is imperative that they are aware of the needs and opportunities available in the field of aging,” aid Kathy Baker, Director of Eldermount.

(The students are Alison Damon, Alicia Haney, Cindy Jesse, Claire Kohlman, Diane Littleton, Erika Lundstedt, and Cori White.)

Outstanding Caregiver Award – Chris Payne (resident of Avondale)

Payne was nominated by Octavia E. Gray, whose father he cared for and befriended until the older man’s death last October at the age of 97. In a poignant tribute to Payne, Gray wrote about the many times that Payne went beyond the call of duty, including visiting her father in the hospital and a nursing home when he was not a home care client.

When Gray’s father was near death, Payne was at his side. “Even though he was not being paid, he sat with Dad, played gospel music for him and held his hand,”. Gray wrote. “And when Dad took his last breath...Chris was there with our family to say goodbye to his buddy who he always called “Mr. James.”

Payne works for A.D. Home Health Care whose administrator, Valerie Duplain, said “He has consistently provided extraordinary and caring service.”

Outstanding Caregiver Award, Paid – Debra Pitts (resident of Price Hill area - zip 45205)

Debra Pitts works for Day Share Senior Services, helping people with severe physical disabilities who would be institutionalized without her reliable service. In addition to physical care, she advocates for her clients to ensure they receive the services they need.

One client, who has multiple sclerosis, has received help from Pitts for four years. “Without Debra in my life, I would be helplessly confined to my bed or be in a nursing home, which I refuse to go to,” he said. “She comes to my apartment seven days a week, twice a day...Nothing has ever stopped Debra from caring for me. I have never had anyone in my life who is as special as Debra. She allows me to live!”

Outstanding Caregiver Award – Donna Wooton (resident of Union Township, Clermont County)

When her children were young, Donna Wooton devoted her volunteer hours to their school, but later turned her considerable energy toward caring for her mother, who has Alzheimer's disease, and her mentally-challenged brother, who lives with her and her family.

In addition to her caregiving, Wooton works part-time and volunteers at the Clermont Senior Services Adult Day Program. While caring for her mother, Wooton became an advocate for the rights of people with Alzheimer's, frequently traveling to Columbus to lobby officials and writing letters to legislators and medical authorities.

Outstanding Meals on Wheels Service Award – Rae Bunten (resident of Oxford area, Butler County)

Rae Bunten has volunteered for Meals on Wheels for 28 of her 84 years. She volunteers for Oxford Senior Citizens, Inc., beginning as a substitute and moving up to become the Tuesday Chairperson, responsible for a variety of tasks related to routing, lining up the people delivering the meals, packing and cleaning up.

Though no longer a chairperson, Bunten continues to deliver meals and serve as a dispatcher. "Rae always has a smile on her face and brightens everyone's day," said Jennifer Marcum, Volunteer Coordinator.

John Wycliffe Fleming Youth Award – Boy Scout Troop 196, Bethel

A project that began as a small effort to provide holiday packages of cleaning supplies and personal care items to seniors has turned into a year-round venture involving scouts, their families and friends.

Last December, the scouts decorated and stuffed 38 cardboard copy paper boxes with toiletries, cleaning supplies, puzzle books, socks, slippers, treats, and Christmas cards which were given to seniors who have very limited income or no family support. Their 2008 goal is 50 boxes.

"The agency receives phone calls and cards from grateful seniors who are deeply touched by the troop's generosity," said Clermont Senior Services Volunteer Coordinator Sharon Brumagem. "Sometimes the box of goodies is the only gift the senior receives."

About Council on Aging

Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio (COA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults and their families.

Since 1974, COA has been designated by the state of Ohio as the Area Agency on Aging for Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton and Warren counties. COA plans, coordinates, funds and administers programs for an area that is home to more than 252,000 adults age 60 and older.

COA promotes choice, independence, dignity and well-being of older adults through a range of services that help them remain in their homes for as long as possible.

One call to COA links people to the wide variety of agencies, information and programs that serve older adults.

For Answers on Aging:

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