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Press Contacts:
Audrey Cohen
Jackie Savage
Epoch 5 Public Relations
acohen@epoch5.com
jsavage@epoch5.com

THE EMPIRE STATE ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTED LIVING CONDUCTS STATE-WIDE AWARDS PROGRAM TO RECOGNIZE EMPLOYEES WORKING IN ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITIES ACROSS NEW YORK

11 INDIVIDUALS RECEIVE 2020 ALL-STAR AWARD DURING NATIONAL ASSISTED LIVING WEEK SEPTEMBER 13 – 19

Clifton Park, New York – September 15, 2020 – In honor of National Assisted Living Week (September 13-19, 2020), The Empire State Association of Assisted Living (ESAAL) proudly announces the recipients of its annual “All-Star” Award. Each of the 11 winners is employed by ESAAL member communities across New York State and was chosen by the heads of over 300 assisted living communities that employ tens of thousands of New Yorkers.

“These All-Stars are true examples of healthcare heroes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, assisted living staffers were put under unprecedented pressure, fulfilling healthcare necessities, enforcing proper safety protocols, and keeping up the spirits of residents while they were isolated from each other as well as family and friends,” said Lisa Newcomb, Executive Director, ESAAL. “Our state-wide awards program is to honor individuals that have gone above and beyond their usual job description. It has been a challenging six months for many. But not being able to visit your elderly loved one really touched so many lives both personally and professionally. These 11 individuals are godsend.”

Award recipients reflect the “Best of the Best” and work and reside in New York City, the Mid-Hudson Valley, Long Island, North Country, Syracuse, and Rochester.

The 2020 ESAAL “All Star” Award Recipients are:

Dawn Blish, Home Health Aide, Ghent Assisted Living, Ghent, NY
Since July, Dawn’s hours have begun daily at 5 AM; a decision made by Dawn at the onset of COVID so that she would be able to provide excellent care to her residents. Since then, she has consistently worked on many of her days off, realizing the “all hands on deck” needs taking place. She always maintains a positive attitude which in turn creates a positive atmosphere for all.

Tirhas Ghebremichael, Housekeeper, The Bristol at White Plains, White Plains, NY

Tirhas has routinely been recognized by Bristol residents for her warm demeanor, her ongoing work to go above and beyond, and for treating the residents like her own family. On many occasions, the community receives an email and hand written letters from families and residents praising Tirhas' work and her kindness. She is always respectful to the residents and takes pride in the way she cleans and maintains their apartments. Bristol residents even get excited to know Tirhas is working on their floor so they can share a nice conversation with her.

Deborah Foster, LPN, The Cambridge, Cambridge, NY

Debbie's "Go Get 'em" attitude and determination to always provide each and every resident with the highest level of care has made her a superstar from day one. She puts her own needs after the needs of residents and is considered by the staff as The Cambridge's own "Teepa Snow," for her always positive approach to care. Debbie is also highly educated on ALL of the challenges that residents face and will willingly attend to residents who she knows are going to require the highest level of care and attention. Her mantra is "OUR RESIDENTS DESERVE THE BEST."

Anna Miller, Activities Coordinator, Chenango Valley Home, Norwich, NY

Anna has worked very hard over the past several months to keep moral up for all Chenango Valley Home residents and other staffers. Her hard work has included continuously working with families to coordinate virtual calls with their loved ones and always remains in constant touch with family members to keep them up to date on all of their loved one's daily activities. Paramount to Anna is to make sure her residents' routines stay as close to normal as possible, realizing their need for a daily routine. Her daily smile betters everyone's mood; she comes to work daily ready to make everyone happy.

Kelsey Persons, Memory Care Manager, the Landing of Brighton, Rochester, NY

Kelsey joined The Landing of Brighton in December 2018 and spent her first year transforming its memory care unit into a superior quality, highly rated option for families. During this time, Kelsey hired and trained all new staff, while learning all she could about her residents and their families and created a top notch work environment and loving home for all. Within the first year, The Landing's census went from 16 residents to 31 in its Memory Care Unit as a direct result of Kelsey's devotion, time, and unparalleled programming. Today, amid COVID, Kelsey is directly responsible for keeping the memory care unit running smoothly and successfully. Her daily routine includes individually taking care of residents' personal hygiene, making sure they are nourished, and spending hours managing her staff's schedules to get some relief. She works 14 hour days, many days in a row, to make sure residents are safe, well cared for and loved. With 25 residents and countless staff diagnosed with Covid, Kelsey never missed a day of work. Kelsey is a role model who puts a smile on her face, has patience in her heart and love in her soul.

Jackie Lebau, Activities Director, The 80th Street Residence, New York, NY

Located on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, Jackie has worked as the Activities Director at The 80th Street Residence in New York City since 2016. In March 2020, when New York City came to be known as the epicenter of the Coronavirus pandemic, Jackie went above and beyond to keep her residents engaged in meaningful activities to keep them connected to the New York City they had always loved. She worked with vendors to transform beloved programs into virtual events, she arranged virtual tours of New York City museums, she arranged weekly music therapy sessions, sing-a-longs, and live chamber music concerts. Jackie also tapped into favorite yoga instructors to arrange ongoing virtual classes and set up a Sweet Readers program for avid community book lovers. And Jackie didn't stop there. She

invited family members to also participate in the virtual programs and events so they could feel connected to their loved ones. Jackie also used COVID time to explore new programs that could bring residents and families together such as bringing Eversound into the community; a wireless listening device that enhanced window visits for residents and their families. Jackie is a hero not only to residents, but also to those that work with her as she inspires all to keep going when everything else is challenged.

Sharon Miller, Home Health Attendant, Brooklyn Boulevard ALP, Brooklyn, NY

Sharon has been a true hero at the Brooklyn Boulevard ALP since the start of the pandemic. As residents were diagnosed, or started to show symptoms, Sharon exemplified true leadership skills, providing care for those that needed more help than usual. She consistently took extra time with each assigned resident, and when completing her work, provided assistance to others as well. She is an inspiration to many.

Teasha Wells, LPN, Head Nurse, Plattduetsche Home Society EHP & AH, Franklin Square, NY

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Head Nurse at Plattduetsche Home Society, Teasha was called upon to chart a course through what has become an ongoing storm. On an ongoing basis, Teasha inspired her staff and colleagues, by thinking outside the box to solve daunting staff and resource challenges, where no prior blueprint or guide existed. Together with Executive Chef Thomas Henrichs, she developed new protocols and safety measures, to successfully protect senior residents and staff, which then went on to be further refined as the communities' "best practices." Teasha leveraged her relationships with medical professionals within and beyond the community, to provide every advantage to shield residents and staff from an outbreak, and her work was highly successful, as confirmed by DOH on-site inspections, and subsequent DOH nursing staff testing of resident volunteers, both at the communities' Enriched Housing and Adult Home facilities

Ginger Bonner, Recreation Director, Amber Court of Westbury, Westbury, NY

One employee that has made the most remarkable impact on the Amber Court Family has been Ginger Bonner, the communities' Recreation Director at Amber of Westbury. Ginger has been with Amber Court for over 16 years. She literally embraced the concept of making our residents her extended family from the day she joined Amber Court. Prior to the pandemic, Ginger was already amazing. Her unconventional ways of entertaining residents made her a celebrity among its inner community. Upon suffering this unimaginable event that changed the lives of residents so drastically, Ginger was the real hero that made it her mission to maintain as much normalcy in their lives as she possibly could. Throughout the entire quarantine, Ginger never skipped a beat. From in room scavenger hunts, to hall bingo, and a mobile arts and crafts cart, Ginger thought of it all. She helped families connect with their loved ones through Video-chat, she made daily posts to the Facebook page to help everyone feel connected, and she even organized a staff recognition car parade in which the resident's families drove through the parking lot of the community to show their appreciation for the staff that worked tirelessly to keep their loved ones safe. In and out of rooms, changing PPE a thousand times, and working extended hours, Ginger never stopped! She never lost her drive, her optimism, or her ability to come up with creative activities that made residents feel entertained even in the confinement of their rooms. Ginger is well connected with various local organizations, which very kindly made donations to residents and continue to regularly show their support. Ginger has accumulated over 1400+ followers on the Amber Court Westbury Facebook page simply because people enjoy being engaged in her posts. She inspires people by making the best of each situation. She will say she is just doing her job but in reality, she is bringing peace of mind to so many families who can't be with their loved ones right now.

“Without Ginger we would be lost!” says Amber Court. “We recognize how lucky we are to have her and feel that she truly deserves to be recognized for the hero that she is!”

Jennifer Turner, Assistant Administrator, Case Manager, McPeak’s Adult Home, Patchogue, NY
Jennifer is a superstar employee at McPeak’s. From the start of COVID, Jennifer’s job entailed securing the many daily updates from the New York State Department of Health, a vital responsibility for the community. Jennifer took complete ownership of this important role, which were and continue to be needed for the community to remain compliant with the many mandated protocols and new procedures needed. Her goal was and continues to be, to protect her residents and employees. With McPeak’s now COVID-free for over two months, Jennifer stays on top of COVID news and prevention, sharing regular updates with the community.

William Fulgoni, Maintenance Department, Valley Vista Adult Home, Highland, NY
Bill is a talented, dedicated, highly competent and treasured employee at the Valley Vista Adult Home. His friendly demeanor and great sense of humor make him a pleasure to work with. Bill is responsible for maintaining the property in and around the community and takes great pride in everything he does including his talented landscaping abilities, which the residents enjoy on a regular basis, often calling the community a show place! Bill consistently adheres to and enforces infection control measures which were increased tremendously at the start of the pandemic. Bill is also known to handle each and every resident’s personal maintenance needs, sometimes in advance of being called upon. Bill is extremely proud of the excellent work he does at Valley Vista, always going the extra mile.

To read more about each All Star, click here

<https://esaal.memberclicks.net/esaal-all-stars-stand-out-staff>

About Empire State Association of Assisted Living

Empire State Association of Assisted Living is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening New York State's assisted living sector and promoting the best interests of providers and residents. Founded in 1979, ESAAL is the only association that exclusively represents the assisted living industry, serving 300 Assisted Living Residences, Adult Homes, Enriched Housing Programs and Assisted Living Programs throughout New York State. These member residences are home to more than 30,000 seniors.

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