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Lyngblomsten Care Center's Carol Keller Honored as Caregiver of the Year

In care centers and assisted living facilities across the Twin Cities metro area, there are many caregivers. One, Carol Keller, has risen to the top as the Caregiver of the Year, an honor bestowed by Minnesota Health and Housing Alliance. The award was announced at the annual MHHA Institute for Older Adult Services held in Minneapolis Feb. 6-8. More than 3,000 people from across the state attended the event under the theme "Building Blocks: Creating the Future of Aging Services." It focused on workforce issues, transforming aging services to meet the needs of a growing population of older Minnesotans and building public trust.

Keller's award was made from among caregivers nominated in the seven-county metro region. She is a registered nursing assistant at Lyngblomsten Care Center, 1415 Almond Ave., St. Paul.

Lyngblomsten is one of a growing number of Minnesota care centers adopting a "person-directed care" approach to caregiving, one that offers residents more intimate settings and more flexibility in their scheduling. At Lyngblomsten, the small groups are called "neighborhoods," where Keller is a key staff person.

Quick to share personal stories about her horses, her gardens, her grandchildren and her own aging parents, Keller is known for developing such trust in residents that they view her as a family member. As one resident wrote: "She just knows how to do everything the right way. She listens to people and follows their directions. Sometimes, she will even come up with better ideas." Another resident observed: "She can cheer up the sad people and get the stubborn ones to go along with her. I can't see her so well because of my eyes, but I can hear it in her voice and tell by her actions that she is a special person."

It takes more than cheer and dedication to work as a nursing assistant, it takes the skill to know how to help people and to recognize their needs. As nurse John Maidl observed, "She knows her residents so well that she can point out some of their changes that are so subtle that many of the rest of us won't see them." As a result, health problems are caught sooner.

Caregiver of the Year is a coveted award from MHHA. The association also honors volunteers, organizational trustees, professional leaders, innovative practices, community service and mission-driven work at its annual Institute. To learn more about MHHA and to obtain consumer information about older adult services, go to www.mhha.com.

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