

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Shirley Wernisch Honored for Volunteer Work at Senior Haven

Shirley Wernisch has received a District Volunteer of the Year award from the state's largest organization of older adult services professionals for her service to Senior Haven, part of Sanford Canby Medical Center. Minnesota Health and Housing Alliance (MHHA) announced the award at their annual Institute for Older Adult Services held in Minneapolis Feb. 6-8. More than 3,000 people 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.

Wernisch's award was from among nominations in MHHA District E, covering 15 counties in southwestern Minnesota. She was praised as "perpetually upbeat and tireless" by Joy Brakke, director of activities, therapy and volunteer services, one of many who nominated Wernisch for the award.

Wernisch's relationship with Senior Haven began in 1978 when she came on board as a nursing assistant and later as an activity aide. She retired in 2001, but what really happened is that she traded a paycheck for a volunteer badge. Unable to leave Senior Haven behind, Wernisch now uses her time and talents to help in numerous ways. Even through small things – like helping a resident clean their eyeglasses – Wernisch shows that each person is important and deserves time and attention. She helps boost residents' self-esteem by helping to assure that their services in the facility beauty shop go smoothly. Or, if necessary, she takes the services to a resident's room.

Senior Haven Administrator Nancy Salmon commented: "Shirley does so much more than we're probably aware of. Some things are noticeable if they aren't done. Shirley does those things and never calls attention to it. She's tuned in to the comfort of other people."

Volunteer of the Year is a coveted award from MHHA. The association also honors caregivers, 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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Karen Bindert Honored as Caregiver of the Year for Work at Senior Haven

Karen Bindert, a 28-year veteran nursing assistant, was recently honored as the District E Caregiver of the Year, an award announced Feb. 6 in Minneapolis during the Minnesota Health and Housing Alliance Institute for Older Adult Services. District E is composed of 15 counties in southwestern Minnesota.

Bindert is a lead certified nursing assistant at Senior Haven, part of Sanford Canby Medical Center. Known for her experience, her sense of humor and her skill in dealing with residents' physical as well as emotional needs, Bindert impressed judges as a leader.

She was chosen from among nominated district members of MHHA, the state's largest association for older adult services providers. The award was announced at an event that attracted more than 3,000 attendees. Its theme, "Building Blocks: Creating the Future of Aging Services," focused on workforce issues, transforming aging services to meet the needs of a growing population of older Minnesotans and building public trust.

Bindert was nominated by Senior Haven Administrator Nancy Salmon who commented: "Karen is a wonderfully kind, optimistic person. She is always upbeat, even when things aren't going smoothly."

Bindert is known for rolling up her sleeves and pitching in even when the job is not exactly hers to do. She also has a reputation for being a great trainer of newer staff. No wonder, since she's got nearly three decades of experience. Her go-getter attitude caused one nominator to write: "She gets more done in one day than some do in two days!"

Salmon noted that Bindert was a role model for other staff when it came to blending work with family responsibility. "Karen has shown by example how to balance being a caregiver and a family member of a resident at the same time. In our small community, it is not unusual for a staff member's parent or grandparent to be a resident. Karen was able to apply her skill and experience when her grandfather was a resident."

Caregiver of the Year is a top 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.
