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## Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging unveils 2013 award winners

*Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Ohio Department of Aging Director and Ohio Medicaid Director among those celebrated for serving older Ohioans*

**Columbus, Ohio** – Today, the **Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging** (o4a) announced the recipients of their 2013 awards at their 24th annual conference. A diverse array of winners partnered with o4a and Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging to improve the lives of older Ohioans, Ohioans with disabilities and their families.

- **Ohio State Innovators Award: Ohio Department of Aging Director Bonnie K. Burman and State Medicaid Director John McCarthy.** "Directors Burman and McCarthy have demonstrated a willingness and ability to seek meaningful input from stakeholders and national experts as they steer Ohio toward innovative approaches to integrating health and long-term services and supports as well as improving the long-term care system," said o4a CEO Larke Recchie. "They have both shown the fortitude and conviction needed to press forward."
- **Outstanding Advocate of the Year: Will Petrik.** "In his role as the State Director of Advocates for Ohio's Future, Will motivated and organized advocates with a steady and respectful approach to accomplish many policy and legislative victories, including the recent push for Ohio to extend Medicaid benefits to 275,000 individuals," said Recchie.
- **Outstanding Area Agency on Aging/Provider Partnership: Chillicothe Veterans Affairs Medical Center.** Area Agency on Aging 7 and the Medical Center's Ohio Veteran-Directed Program, the largest rural initiative of its kind in the nation, helps veterans of all ages move back home and out of institutionalized care.
- **Outstanding Area Agency on Aging/Provider Partnership: Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine Department of Geriatrics.** The Dayton Area Agency on Aging and the Department of Geriatrics collaborated to close a gap in care in their community.
- **Elected Official Advocacy Award: Representative Ron Amstutz.** "We honor Representative Amstutz for his dedication to developing a deep understanding of aging issues and coming to thoughtful conclusions," said Recchie.
- **The o4a Product Development and Price Modeling Group** led by Sharon Fusco of the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio was recognized for their service.

"Area Agencies on Aging have deep roots in their communities and use those relationships to benefit seniors and people with disabilities and to move public policy," said Recchie. "These partners represent a sampling of the strong connections the agencies have in their communities."

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“Ohio is fortunate to have an aging network that is devoted to helping the state prepare for the needs of our growing and changing aging population and sees the value of true innovation,” said Burman. “By keeping our focus on our elders, we have been able to make changes that provide them access to an array of high-quality services and supports that are person-centered in policy and practice, and well-coordinated.”

“Innovation and reforms at the state level have only been made possible through the hard work and input of our stakeholder community,” said McCarthy. “Thanks to o4a and its partners, long-term care in Ohio is seeing unprecedented levels of quality and coordination.”

“I am humbled and honored,” said Petrik. “I feel blessed to work with such a great community of advocates.”

**About o4a** – The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a), a nonprofit organization, is a statewide network of agencies that provide services for the elderly, as well as advocate on behalf of older Ohioans. The Association addresses issues which have an impact on the aging network, provides services to members, and serves as a collective voice for Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging. For more, visit [www.ohioaging.org](http://www.ohioaging.org).

**About ODA** – The Ohio Department of Aging works to ensure that our elders are respected as vital members of society who continue to grow, thrive and contribute. We collaborate with state agencies and community partners, including area agencies on aging, to help integrate aging needs into local plans and ensure that aging Ohioans have access to a wide array of high-quality services and supports that are person-centered in policy and practice. Our programs include the PASSPORT Medicaid waiver, caregiver support, the long-term care ombudsman program, the Golden Buckeye Card and more. Visit [www.aging.ohio.gov](http://www.aging.ohio.gov).

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