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OHIO ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING ANNOUNCES 2025 AWARD WINNERS AT STATE CONFERENCE

**Ohio Department of Medicaid Director Maureen Corcoran and Senator Theresa Gavarone Among Those
Celebrated for Advocacy on Behalf of Older Ohioans**

COLUMBUS, OH (October 20, 2025) — The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a) celebrated its 36th Annual Conference on October 15–16 at the Hilton Easton in Columbus, bringing together more than 500 professionals from across Ohio’s aging and disability network for two days of learning, collaboration, and recognition.

During the conference, o4a announced the recipients of its 2025 awards, honoring individuals and organizations whose leadership and innovation have strengthened services for older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and families across Ohio.

Billie Johnson Award for Excellence in the Aging Network: Larke Recchie

“The Billie Johnson Award recognizes extraordinary leadership, vision, and lasting contributions to Ohio’s aging network,” said Duana Patton, o4a Board President and CEO of the Area Agency on Aging, Ohio District 5. “Larke Recchie is a true champion whose work continues to inspire the next generation of leaders. She embodies what it means to turn policy into practice with both wisdom and heart.”

Outstanding Public Service Award: Maureen Corcoran, Director, Ohio Department of Medicaid

“We are so grateful for Director Corcoran’s partnership and leadership in advancing Ohio’s home and community-based services,” said Beth Kowalczyk, CEO of o4a. “Her strategic initiatives, particularly the statewide expansion of the Next Generation MyCare program, have strengthened the supports available to older Ohioans and improved their access to quality care. Her commitment to public service has positively impacted countless lives across the state.”

Elected Official Advocacy Award: Senator Theresa Gavarone (2nd Senate District), Majority Floor Leader

“We deeply appreciate Senator Gavarone’s leadership in securing additional funding for the Senior Community Services Program in the FY26–27 State Budget,” said Kowalczyk. “These investments will help more older adults remain active, engaged, and well in their communities.”

Advocate of the Year Award: Gina Wilt, Advocacy Director, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO)

“Gina’s advocacy has shone a light on the connection between aging, disability, and housing,” said Kowalczyk. “Her tireless efforts to address housing insecurity among older adults have driven solutions that make Ohio’s communities more inclusive and supportive for all.”

Partnership Award: Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio (AOoA), YMCA of Greater Toledo, and Chester J. Zablocki Senior Center

“When the Zablocki Senior Center’s aging building became unsafe, the AOoA partnered with the YMCA to establish a new home inside the state-of-the-art Wayman Palmer YMCA,” said Patton. “This innovative collaboration created a vibrant, intergenerational space where older adults can enjoy expanded programming, meals, and fitness opportunities.”

Partnership Award: Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging and The Ohio State University College of Social Work’s Age-Friendly Innovation Center

“This partnership has advanced research and innovation on housing insecurity and emergency preparedness for older adults and people with disabilities,” said Patton. “Their work has produced valuable data, toolkits, and pilot projects that are informing policy and practice statewide.”

Partnership Award: Buckeye Hills Regional Council, Marietta Memorial Hospital Occupational Therapy, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol

“This creative collaboration brought the CarFit program to older drivers in southeastern Ohio,” said Patton. “The program’s success, which offers vehicle safety checks, adaptive equipment guidance, and driver education, has inspired expansion to additional counties, demonstrating the power of cross-sector partnerships to improve safety and independence.”

AAA Staff Person of the Year: 11 Honorees Dedicated to the Statewide Next Generation MyCare Ohio Transition

“Each year, o4a recognizes an outstanding AAA staff member who has made a significant contribution to Ohio’s Aging Network. But this year is a little different—and very special,” said Kowalczyk. “Instead of honoring just one individual, we are recognizing 11 incredible leaders who have gone above and beyond in service to our network and to the older Ohioans and individuals with disabilities we serve. They have led and co-led critical workgroups, devoting countless hours to building a shared foundation for success in preparing for the transition to Next Generation MyCare Ohio. Their leadership has helped set a statewide standard for quality, accountability, and collaboration which strengthened our partnerships with the state and with managed care plans.”

About o4a: The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a) is a nonprofit network dedicated to helping older Ohioans, people with disabilities, and their families live independently and with dignity. We represent Ohio’s 12 Area Agencies on Aging, advocate for strong aging and disability policies, and connect communities to vital services like transportation, meals, caregiver support, and home and community-based care. Together, we work to ensure that every Ohioan has the resources and opportunities to age well at home and in their community.

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