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CONTACT: Jodi Boyne
jboyne@leadingagemn.org

Craig Stewart, Ecumen Meadows in Worthington, Named Volunteer of the Year

Saint Paul, MN – (February 10, 2020) – Craig Stewart, who lives and volunteers at Ecumen Meadows in Worthington, was recently named the Volunteer of the Year by LeadingAge Minnesota. The award recognizes individuals who volunteer in older adult services for their dedication, commitment and positive impact on the lives of seniors and their communities.

“Craig Stewart is an extraordinary volunteer who has a deep commitment to the well-being of others and is on a mission to give people with dementia the gift of memory,” said Gayle Kvenvold, President & CEO, LeadingAge Minnesota. “We are honored to recognize Craig for his passion, his lifelong commitment to learning and for the priceless gift he has given to those who have dementia.”

Stewart is an around-the-clock resident and volunteer at Ecumen Meadows in Worthington. He first moved to the community in 2015 when his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and immediately became an integral person in the lives of those who live and work at there. Stewart truly lives for helping others and there is not a day that goes by without seeing him leading activities to make life better for residents and staff alike at Ecumen Meadows. A few examples of his volunteer activities include;

- Leading exercise and self-led walking classes for residents in memory care;
- Tending to the community flower pots and bunker gardens;
- Assisting with the prize patrol at evening bingo events; and
- Entertaining residents and staff with poetry readings, comedy sketches; and an act he performs with his puppet partner, Clara.

The crowning achievement of Stewart’s volunteerism is the interactive reminiscence therapy he singlehandedly created for memory care residents that he first developed to help make a difference in his wife’s quality of life. A former college professor, Stewart thoroughly researched human memory and specifically focused on a fertile area of memory known as a “memory bump” that occurs between the ages of mid-teens and early 20s. This means that for residents of memory care in their 80s or 90s the images, songs and events from the late 1930s – early 1950s could be accessed and potentially slow dementia.

Stewart used this knowledge to develop his own original program to help people with dementia get in touch with their memories and live a fuller, more engaged life. With the help of his puppet partner, Clara, he assists residents in recalling the happier times of their youth and young adulthood by singing, telling jokes and engaging them with a “Complete the Thought” exercise.

“Craig is an extraordinary volunteer who genuinely lives to help others. He is enduring spirit of Ecumen Meadows and makes life better for residents and staff alike,” said Nancy Garvin, Executive Director, Ecumen Meadows.

For more information, watch [Craig Stewart – Volunteer of the Year](#).

Photo Caption: Craig Stewart received the Volunteer of the Year award at the LeadingAge Minnesota Institute & Expo, the state’s largest and most comprehensive aging services conference attended by more than 4,000 older adult services professionals. Pictured (l to r): Sara Sterling, Chair, LeadingAge

Minnesota Awards & Recognition Committee, Gayle Kvenvold, President and CEO, LeadingAge Minnesota; Craig Stewart; and Nancy Stratman, Chair, LeadingAge Minnesota Board of Directors.

About LeadingAge Minnesota

Driven to transform and enhance the experience of aging, LeadingAge Minnesota works alongside our members, caregivers, advocates and consumers to collectively shape the future of aging services and ensure older adults in every community live with dignity, meaning and purpose. Together with more than 50,000 caregivers, LeadingAge Minnesota members provide quality services and supports to nearly 70,000 older adults every day in independent senior housing, assisted living, adult day, home care and skilled nursing settings.