

MINNESOTA HEALTH & HOUSING ALLIANCE

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN OLDER ADULT SERVICES

News Release

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Senior Housing Leadership Award Goes to Mary Jo Thorne of Northfield Retirement Community

Three words are often repeated when people describe Mary Jo Thorne, director of housing and services at Northfield Retirement Community: Dedication, compassion and faith. Add to that her energy and leadership, and you have a sense of the Minnesota Health & Housing Alliance Senior Housing Leadership award winner for 2007.

The award was presented at the association's annual conference in Minneapolis, the Institute for Older Adult Services, on Feb. 8. The award was presented by MHHA Awards Committee Chair Stasia Allyn of Cerenity Care Center, South St. Paul, and MHHA Board Chair Pat Vincent, CEO of Three Links Care Center, Northfield. Nominations for the award came from across the state.

For two decades, Thorne has brought her "can do" spirit to the field of senior housing. Her leadership has helped provide access to quality services to seniors, particularly in underserved communities in Minnesota.

She was a pioneer in promoting independence and creating choices for residents who needed oversight, but not skilled care. Her passion for improving the quality of life and services to older adults has benefited senior settings both rural and urban. For example, her spirit of collaboration proved crucial in the development of a partnership between Minneapolis Public Housing, Hennepin County and the Board of Social Ministry, now Ecumen, to provide affordable assisted living in north and south Minneapolis neighborhoods.

One of the barriers for new residents in assisted living can be the cost of furniture, towels, sheets, dishes and other items to set up their new apartments. Thorne not only donated

items personally to an innovative free store where residents could shop, she tirelessly recruited friends and family to do the same.

In each organization for which she has worked, Thorne has stood for quality, for resident choice, and for hospitality as the right approach to service delivery. She lives the philosophy that "residents do not live where we work, we work where they live."

Thorne has been a leader in senior housing within Minnesota Health & Housing Alliance where she serves on the board of directors and on a number of policy committees.

The MHHA Institute for Older Adult Services draws more than 3,000 caregivers, nursing home administrators, senior housing managers and other aging services professionals for three days of education, networking and exhibits. It is held annually in February at the Hyatt hotel in Minneapolis.

Minnesota Health & Housing Alliance (MHHA) is Minnesota's largest membership association representing faith- and community-based providers of aging services. MHHA represents the complete continuum of services for older adults including nursing home care, senior housing with supportive services, independent senior housing and community-based services.

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