

McKnight's Announces 2nd Annual Pinnacle Award Winners



James M. Berklan, Dec 11, 2023

Thirty elite long-term care leaders have been elected to the second annual class of McKnight's Pinnacle Awards winners, organizers announced Monday.

The sector veterans earned recognition for driving change, setting new standards and inspiring others. They were nominated by peers and selected by an independent, national panel of judges.

Honorees include an array of veteran long-term care operators, caregivers and affiliated professionals who have enjoyed careers of 20 years or longer performing at the highest levels in skilled nursing, senior living and home care.

"This is an incredible collection of veterans who have made lasting marks on their fields. Such a group of outstanding professionals may gather only once a year," praised McKnight's Publisher Craig Roth in announcing the winners. "We're looking forward to seeing them all together in March to honor them in person."

The Pinnacle Awards are a joint effort of McKnight's Long-Term Care News and sister media brands McKnight's Senior Living and McKnight's Home Care.

Winners will be celebrated March 21 at a gala awards ceremony and banquet at the iconic Ivy Room in Chicago. The event is open to all friends, family, colleagues and supporters. Coverage of the industry's most vaunted independent awards program will appear both online and in print.

Pinnacle honorees are recognized in six categories. Winners were chosen by an independent panel of skilled nursing, senior living and home care leaders who assessed nominees across four major criteria groupings.

As part of the program, organizers will announce in January a Career Achievement Award winner, who also will be feted at the March ceremony.

Please check the program website at mcknightspinnacleawards.com for a gallery of winners and more information about the McKnight's Pinnacle Awards, including details about the awards ceremony and dinner.

[The 2024 McKnight's Pinnacle Awards winners are:](#)

Thought Leader Award

- Joan DiPaola, Director Dementia Program Development, Harmony Village at CareOne Paramus
- Jessica Fear, Senior Vice President, Behavioral Health VNS Health
- E. Joseph "Joe" Steier III, President/CEO, Signature HealthCARE

Inspiration Award

- Mark Baiada, Chairman and Founder, BAYADA Home Health Care
- Esther Kamara-Conteh, Vice President Care Management Operations, VNS Health
- Esmerelda Lee, Chief Operating Officer/EVP, Century Park Associates
- Roberto Muñiz, President & CEO, Parker Health Group
- Cathy Williams, CEO, Winslow Campus of Care

Agent of Change Award

- Vassar Byrd, Incoming CEO, The Kendal Corporation
- Deke Cateau, CEO, AG Rhodes Health & Rehab
- Kristen Duell, Executive Vice President of Experience & Innovation, FirstLight Home Care
- Phillip Hill, Administrator, Principle Long Term Care
- Colleen Kamin, Executive Director, Anthem Memory Care
- Marianne Longo, Chief Clinical Officer, Help at Home
- David Totaro, Chief Marketing and Government Affairs Officer, BAYADA Home Health Care

Industry Ally Award

- Andrew Carle, Lead Faculty, Senior Living Administration, Georgetown University
- R. Tamara Konetzka, Louis Block Professor of Public Health Sciences Professor of Medicine, University of Chicago
- Clifton Porter II, Senior Vice President of Government Relations, American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living

Setting the Standard Award

Sheila Davis, Senior Executive Vice President, Area Operations, Always Best Care Senior Services

- Jamie Dlatt, Chief Operating Officer, Legacy Healthcare
- Charles "Chuck" Hastings, CFO/Vice President of Finance and Business Development, Juniper Communities
- Kurt Merkelz, Senior Vice President, Chief Medical Officer, Compassus
- John Swanson, CEO, Willow Valley Development Corp.
- Raeann Voorhies, CEO, Vanda Health

Unsung Hero Award

- Wendy Blackman, Director of Reflections, The Bristol at North Woodmere
- Orah Burack, Senior Research Associate, The New Jewish Home
- Business Partner Award
- Tim Hadley, CEO, Evive Brands
- Steven Littlehale, Chief Innovation Officer, Zimmet Healthcare Services Group
- Cindy Smith, Director, Professional Services, Omnicare
- Wendy Strain, Director of Consulting Services, Polaris Group

McKnights Long-Term Care News is written for management personnel throughout the continuum of long-term care facilities, including skilled nursing care, subacute care, assisted living, seniors housing, adult day care and home care. Content reaches an audience of 79,000, and focuses on news, trends affecting management decisions, personnel operations, patient care services, legal issues, facility design and resident safety. Features include updates on pharmacy service, legislation affecting the industry and vendor/product news.