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NCAL announces 2018 award winners

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The National Center for Assisted Living has announced the recipients of the 2018 NCAL Awards Program, who will be honored Oct. 7 during a luncheon at the 12th annual NCAL Day, a separate ticketed event at the 69th Annual AHCA/NCAL Annual Convention & Expo in San Diego.

Named **NCAL Administrator of the Year** is Sahar B. Edalati, the executive director at Sunrise Villa Culver City in Los Angeles.

Edalati earned his undergraduate degree in aging and a master's degree in gerontology from the University of Southern California. During his practicum, he lived in an assisted living community, where he was known as “the youngest resident.”

Now, as one of the youngest executive directors at Sunrise Senior Living, Edalati has led Sunrise Villa Culver City to attaining high employee engagement scores as well as the Bronze — Commitment to Quality Award through the AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Program.

Beyond working to improve residents' quality of life, Edalati contributes to the community's social activities with a monthly poetry class for residents. He also expanded Sunrise Villa Culver City's efforts to offer affordable housing to eligible seniors in the larger community as part of a joint partnership with the Culver City Housing Division.

Edalati was nominated for this award by a third party.

Receiving the **NCAL Assisted Living Nurse of the Year** award is Amanda Garcia, RN, the wellness coordinator at The Kensington in Fort Madison, IA.



The Chelsea at Fanwood in Fanwood, NJ., held a dog show as part of its National Assisted Living Week observance.

Garcia has been a registered nurse and The Kensington's wellness coordinator for the past eight years.

When Iowa created a model of the National POLST (Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment) Paradigm, Garcia was the first in the county to become a facilitator and instructor to help ensure residents' end-of-life choices were being honored.

A Virtual Dementia Tour facilitator who has received a certificate as a certified dementia care practitioner from the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners, she helped train staff at the local hospital and Iowa State Penitentiary.

In 2017, The Kensington earned the Silver—Achievement in Quality Award through the AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Program, and Garcia received the Distinguished Director of Nursing in Leadership Award from the Iowa Center for Assisted Living.

She is the current president of the Iowa Council of Nurse Leaders.

Being honored as **NCAL Noble Caregiver in Assisted Living** is Margaret Morton, a recreational therapist at Trezevant Episcopal Home in Memphis, TN.

Morton is credited with developing an activities program that maximizes socialization, independence, functionality and quality of life for the residents of Trezevant Episcopal Home. Specifically, she organized a 10-week equine therapy program for five residents of the memory care unit at a local equine therapy center. Although equine therapy primarily serves children and teens with intellectual or developmental disabilities, Morton demonstrated that it also could benefit older adults; the five residents living with dementia reportedly saw noticeable improvements in their strength, gait and speech.

Morton also introduced art classes, sewing classes and family support groups for loved ones living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. Additionally, Trezevant Episcopal Home is certified as a Music & Memory location thanks to Morton.

Winning **National Assisted Living Week Program of the Year** is The Chelsea at Fanwood in Fanwood, NJ.

Contributing to the recognition is the **National Assisted Living Week program** put together for residents in September 2017 by staff members. To celebrate last year's theme, **"Family is Forever,"** the community held a family barbeque on Grandparents Day, painted an outdoor family tree mural, hosted a family talent show and created a cookbook to pass along family recipes.

The Chelsea at Fanwood also held fundraisers for the Fanwood Fire Department and Rescue Squad and the Alzheimer's Association of New Jersey. Additionally, children from a local day care/preschool visited to participate in a scavenger hunt, where they to unearthed messages meant to inspire one generation from another.

Chelsea Senior Living posted a video of the Fanwood team celebrating on its **Facebook page**. "I am so proud of our team," Annette Watson, executive director of the community, said in a post accompanying the video. "Their hard work on behalf of our residents is a reality every single day, not just during Assisted Living Week. We are honored to win this national recognition."

Sister community **The Chelsea at East Brunswick** had won the same award in 2015.

"Sahar, Amanda, Margaret and the whole team at Chelsea at Fanwood demonstrate how new approaches and continuing edification can reap tremendous rewards," NCAL Executive Director Scott Tittle said. "What's truly promising is that the three individuals the NCAL Awards Program is recognizing are relatively young in their long-term care careers, and already, they are bringing forth innovative ideas and inspiring their colleagues. We hope they motivate more people to discover their calling in serving our nation's seniors and individuals with disabilities."

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