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Illinois Health Care Association Announces Annual Staff and Volunteer Award Winners for 2015

Springfield, IL – The winners of the 2015 Illinois Health Care Association (IHCA) Awards Program were announced last week. The Volunteer and Staff Awards were presented at the General Opening Session and Awards Ceremony and the Nursing Awards were presented at Ovation: A Celebration of Long Term Care Nurses, held in conjunction with the Long Term Care Nurses Association (LTCNA), during IHCA's 65th Annual Convention & Expo in Peoria, IL. Two members of the **Farmington Country Manor** staff were honored with awards—**Jennifer Baker was named Administrator of the Year** and **Kim Thomas was named Director of Nursing of the Year**.

Administrator of the Year: For nearly 20 years Jennifer Baker has been a devoted member of the long term care profession. As administrator of Farmington Country Manor for the past 12 years, Baker has used her experience to create a facility culture that focuses not only on offering top quality care for residents, but on providing them with a safe and happy home as well. She also works hard to ensure that her staff is well-trained and knowledgeable, and that they have everything they need to succeed. Baker is active in the Farmington community as well. She is an outstanding team leader who continuously offers her staff the support they need. "Jennifer is not just our boss, but our friend too. She is our mentor, our role model, and her care and concern for all of us is out of this world, said Restorative LPN Dawn Uryasz. "She not only wants to improve the lives of her staff and residents," added Rhonda Riggins, Care Plan Coordinator, "her dedication to improving lives affects the entire community. She is a true pioneer in transforming cultures and requiring each of us to become a role model for the behaviors and attitudes we expect from others."

Director of Nursing of the Year: Kim Thomas has been the Director of Nursing at the same facility for more than 12 years, which is no easy feat. She believes in providing the highest quality of care to her residents and sets her standards high when it comes to herself and her staff. She is a knowledgeable and compassionate clinician and the strong leadership skills it takes to run her team effectively and efficiently. And, she does it all with a great sense of humor. She is the type of person everyone wants to work with—she can remain calm and lighten the mood in even the most stressful situations. "I cannot imagine doing my job without her," stated Administrator Jennifer Baker. "Our facility would be lost without her hearty laugh and smile. She has such a beautiful and honest way of seeing the world."

"The Long Term Care Nurses Association is pleased to recognize the recipients of this year's nursing awards," stated LTCNA President Becky Wallace. "These individuals have dedicated their careers to serving the long term care population. The lives they have touched and the compassion they have exhibited is tremendous and we extend our deepest gratitude to each of them."

“Our profession is all about CARE—Compassion, Attitude, Respect and Excellence” said IHCA President John Vrba. “This year’s staff and volunteer award winners have shown that they have what it takes to truly make a difference in the lives of the residents they serve and they deserve to be congratulated for their efforts.”

“Illinois Health Care Association is proud to honor all of the award winners – they are the best of the best in our association,” added Executive Director David Voepel. “We hold these dedicated professionals in the highest regard and their recognition gives others in our association someone to aspire to be. We applaud their service to long term care and thank them for a job well done!”

Award recipients are nominated by their peers; Nursing Award winners are chosen by the by the LTCNA Council and Staff and Volunteer Award winners are chosen by the IHCA Awards Task Force; all award winners are announced at the annual IHCA Convention & Expo.

The Long Term Care Nurses Association (LTCNA) is a non-profit organization that serves to bring together those licensed nurses who are committed to the long term care profession and is an affiliate of IHCA.

The Illinois Health Care Association is a non-profit organization comprised of approximately 400 licensed and certified long term care facilities and programs throughout the state. Its members are comprised of proprietary and non-proprietary facilities which represent skilled, intermediate, developmentally disabled, skilled pediatric, assisted living and sheltered levels of care. IHCA seeks to promote the highest standard of services in facilities and programs for the elderly and physically and mentally challenged.

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