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National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

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TWENTY-SIX OLDER VOLUNTEERS HONORED BY METLIFE FOUNDATION AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING IN WASHINGTON, DC

The Older Volunteers Enrich America Awards Program Encourages Adults Over the Age of 50 to Get Involved in Their Communities, Particularly During Tough Economic Times When Resources Are Tight

Washington, DC – Today, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) announced recipients of the 2009 MetLife Foundation *Older Volunteers Enrich America Awards*. The program, now in its seventh year, honors the exemplary contributions of older volunteers and promotes volunteering among older adults nationwide. The award-winning volunteers, who range in age from 56 to 89 years, were in Washington today to attend a ceremony in their honor.

“Now more than ever, volunteers have a vital role to play in strengthening communities,” said Dennis White, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. “We are pleased to join n4a in honoring 26 older volunteers who are making a difference and inspiring individuals of all ages with their commitment and results.”

The award winners, selected by a blue ribbon panel, are recognized in three categories: *Community Champion*, which honors those who use their time and talent to make their community a better place to live; *Mentor*, which recognizes older volunteers who are devoted to working with young people and their families; and *Team Spirit*, which pays tribute to older volunteers who assist older adults.

The top award recipient in each category is recognized as a Gold Honoree:

Frank Iszak, 77, of San Diego, California earned top recognition in the *Community Champion* category. Frank founded the Silver Age Yoga Community Outreach program (SAYCO), a yoga program for disadvantaged seniors. In addition to improving the lives of seniors through free yoga classes, SAYCO established a partnership with the Veteran’s Administration and the University of California, San Diego to pilot a research project that shows the positive impact of silver age yoga, which includes fall prevention due to better balance. Frank recruited more than 150 volunteers to teach classes for seniors and also created a DVD titled “Yoga for Caregivers,” designed to provide stress relief for caregivers. Frank came to the U.S. as a political refugee from Hungary in 1956 and considers his community outreach “his payment of debt to America for the privilege of becoming part of this great society.”

Robert “Bob” Burtwell, 79, of Venice, Florida earned top recognition in the *Mentor* category for his ten years of volunteer work at Laurel Nokomis School (K-8) and at a special drop-out prevention program for at-risk mothers. Mr. Bob, as he is called by his students, is a “Master Gardener” and volunteers as a classroom assistant in the horticulture class where he teaches kids to enjoy the earth. At a local nursing and assisted living facility, Robert and his students arranged planters that residents could enjoy and take care of from their wheelchairs, a true intergenerational experience. Robert is currently working on renovating a neglected playground into a garden to attract and observe birds.

Beatriz (Betty) Marino, 69, of Portland, Oregon earned top recognition in the *Team Spirit* category for her 600 hours of work to help more than 500 Medicare beneficiaries navigate the process of getting access to their benefits. Betty, who speaks fluent Spanish, began volunteering in 2003 when Oregon suffered severe budget cuts that resulted in hundreds of low-income seniors and people with disabilities not being able to afford their medications. Betty’s expertise in low-income assistance and her knowledge of the complicated medical savings accounts and high deductible plans saved lives and brought hope to people who had run out of options.

Sandy Markwood, CEO of n4a, added, “The impact of volunteerism is always powerful, but in these economic times, it is more significant than ever. States and localities are struggling to balance their budgets and valuable programs that benefit our most vulnerable citizens are being cut. Fortunately, there are thousands of volunteers like our 26 honorees here in Washington today who are stepping in and impacting lives. We are grateful that MetLife Foundation has made it possible to recognize their inspirational work at a national level.”

All of the honorees will receive engraved gifts, and the organizations that host the volunteers will receive monetary awards.

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is the leading voice on aging issues for Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) across the country and a champion for Title VI Native American aging programs. n4a’s primary mission is to build the capacity of its members to help older persons and persons with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible. (www.n4a.org)

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife in 1976 to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants support health, education, civic and cultural programs throughout the United States. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.metlife.org.

In addition to the Gold Honorees, 21 individuals and one couple were chosen as the Silver Honorees for their outstanding volunteer contributions.

2009 MetLife Foundation *Older Volunteers Enrich America Award* - Silver Honor Recipients

Community Champion Category

Richard & Margery Armbrecht, 81, Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging Meal Program, **Fredericksburg, Iowa**; Charles E. Conklin, 72, Gunpowder Valley Conservancy, **Glen Arm, Maryland**; Dorothy (Dotty) Cullen, 83, Cumberland County Office on Aging RSVP, **Vineland,**

New Jersey; Jeanette Glennon, 81, Meals on Wheels Volunteer Program, **Staten Island, New York**; Alan Gurvis, 80, RSVP, **Boynton Beach, Florida**; Richard "Dick" Lundgren, 65, Alzheimer's Association Volunteer Program, **Auburn, Washington**; Charles A Strauss, 73, JABA's Volunteer Services, **Faber, Virginia**; Richard Tate, 72, SE WA Aging and Long Term Care Advisory Council, **Ellensburg, Washington**.

Mentor Category

Gerald Sreen, 79, Post Falls School District Mentoring Program, **Post Falls, Idaho**; Archie Thompson, 89, Foster Grandparent Program, **Crescent City, California**.

Team Spirit Category

Alyce Alkire, 83, Rum River Interfaith Caregivers, Inc., **Milaca, Minnesota**; Dennis J. Blome, 71, Shenandoah Area Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, **Front Royal, Virginia**; Caren-Marie Bowman, 56, Medicare Counseling, **Concord, New Hampshire**; Alan Chandler, 58, CVAA Volunteer Program, **Milton, Vermont**; Ronald Colvin, 65, Bergen County Senior Nutrition Program, **Hackensack, New Jersey**; Martha Ford Gladden, 77, AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly, **Washington, DC**; Lois Gross, 70, Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland, Inc., **Glen Burnie, Maryland**; Richard H. Hilton, 70, Southern Maine Agency on Aging Senior Medicare Patrol, **South Portland, Maine**; Lena Nance, 68, RSVP of Greater Cleveland, **Warrensville Heights, Ohio**; Patricia A. Roach, 64, Money Management Program, **Gloucester, Massachusetts**; Ron Thronson, 75, Somerset County Handyman Project, **Bound Brook, New Jersey**; Elaine Zimny, 80, Kindness, Inc., **Lakeview, Arkansas**.

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