

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Behavioral Health Award Winners Announced at Conference

**Lincoln**—Recipients of awards recognizing leadership and motivation in the field of behavioral health were announced at the annual behavioral health conference this week.

The Director's Award for Individual Achievement was given to **Jay Eason** of the Ponca Tribe for working hard to serve the people of the Ponca Tribe. "Jay's honesty and integrity and over 13 years of service to the tribe resulted in his nomination for this award," said Scot L. Adams, director of the Division of Behavioral Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The Director's Award for Team Achievement goes to **Community Alliance**, Omaha, which has a mission of providing wellness, recovery and resiliency to everyone they serve. "They focus on the integration of physical health and mental health, and understand how important both are to overall wellness," Adams said.

From the Success, Hopes and Dreams Conference Committee, the People's Award for encouraging, motivating and inspiring leadership in behavioral health care was given to **Rhonda and Howard Hawks**, of the Hawks Foundation, Omaha, for being champions for individuals who experience mental illness. "Their tireless work demonstrates their belief that recovery, resiliency and wellness are possible for anyone," said Carol Coussons de Reyes, administrator of the Office of Consumer Affairs at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "They have worked to expand service capacity in all levels of care, are open to hearing about challenges and gaps, and how they can help fill those gaps."

The peer support champion award was given to **Marlene Sorenson**, of Lincoln. She is a peer support and wellness specialist at the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Healthcare System. "She rallies peer support forward to communicate recovery, wellness and resiliency," Coussons de Reyes said. Due to her work, three new peer support groups were started.

The Recovery is Real Media Award was given to **Joanne Young** from the Lincoln Journal Star. Her story, "Restoring Dignity to the Dead" (September 25), was about people who were buried in state regional center cemeteries in anonymity and the efforts to remember and honor them.

The Recovery Muse Award was given to **Rodger Gerberding**, with Community Alliance, who uses his art to communicate recovery, resiliency and wellness. He was an Artist of the Arboretum, which is a movement to create community around art at the Lincoln Regional Center.

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