



HONORING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

2026 Guidelines

Honoring Excellence is LeadingAge Illinois' **member** award program that recognizes individuals and organizations that put quality first, deliver excellence and inspire others to do the same. LeadingAge Illinois provider members are invited to submit nominations for the LeadingAge Illinois Honoring Excellence Award Program.

RULES & PROCEDURES:

- ⇒ **Contact Designee: Each member must choose one individual to serve as the designated contact person.** LeadingAge Illinois will send any and all follow-up correspondence and communication to this individual. One designee per site/campus/facility is acceptable. If you are a multi-site organization the designee does not have to be someone from your corporate office. Your corporate office may serve as the designee for all of its sites, however this is not required.
- ⇒ Those submitting nominations must identify the designated contact person on each nomination form.
- ⇒ Nominations **must** be submitted online by using an award program nomination form. There are separate nomination forms for each award.
- ⇒ Nominees **must** be employees of LeadingAge Illinois organizational members in good standing at the time of the Awards Committee's review.
- ⇒ **Nominations must be received by LeadingAge Illinois no later than the date of midnight Friday, March 27, 2026.**
- ⇒ The selection of the winners will be made by the Awards Committee. A scoring system will be used to determine how well the nominee meets each of the criteria for the award they are being nominated for.
- ⇒ Announcement of winners will be made in July 2026 during the 2026 LeadingAge Illinois Annual Conference.
- ⇒ **Award winners will be recognized during the 2026 LeadingAge Illinois Conference.**
- ⇒ **Members with winning nominees will be asked to submit a headshot picture and a one minute video clip describing why their candidate was nominated. By submitting a nomination, the organization agrees that, if their nominee is selected for an award, they will submit a video to be included as part of the LeadingAge Illinois Annual Conference recognizing the individual(s) for the award at their own expense.** Additional details on this will be sent to the contact designee once the winners are selected.

WRITING YOUR NOMINATION

- ⇒ Carefully read the award criteria and specifically address how the nominee meets each criterion.
- ⇒ **Do not include the name of the nominee and/or organization or the location of the organization in the narrative text when writing about how your candidate meets the award criteria.**
- ⇒ For best results, prepare your nomination in a text document first prior to completing the online nomination form. Once you finish, you can then copy and paste the text into the electronic form.
- ⇒ Judging decisions are based on clear and complete content that directly addresses the award criteria. Nominations should contain facts and concrete examples that illustrate why the nominee meets each criterion.

NOMINEE CATEGORIES —There are two nominee categories:

Frontline staff: Those employees whose primary responsibilities **do not include** management and/or supervisory related duties

Management staff: Those employees whose primary role **does include** management-related duties and/or supervision of others

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Each LeadingAge Illinois provider member organization is limited to one frontline staff nomination and one management staff nomination each for the Heart and Hands, Strive and Thrive, and Rising Star Awards.

Please note that the Leadership in Action Award will only have one management staff winner.

An individual may only be nominated for one type of award.

AWARDS: There are four individual awards and one organization award.

Heart and Hands Award: This award is given to an individual who embraces person centered care/service through efforts that go beyond those normally considered within the position's job description. The individual demonstrates exceptional relationships with residents/clients that provides special enrichment, increases quality of life to the residents/clients, and recognizes and responds to the residents/clients needs and values. This individual recognizes opportunities to create personalized experiences and acts on those opportunities creating an enhanced experience for the residents/clients.

Strive and Thrive Award: This award is given to an individual who demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to excellence. Through innovation and/or creative thinking, the individual has produced or created a result that is a direct benefit to the residents/clients or the organization. This award recognizes vision, initiative and creative problem solving.

Leadership in Action Award: This award is given to an individual, who is a **management staff person**, whose actions and leadership greatly enhance the work environment and the quality of life for their colleagues and residents/clients. The individual's accomplishments demonstrate a commitment to a team approach and excellence in the workplace. This collaborative style of leadership has resulted in trusting and respectful relationships with their team and high levels of resident/client satisfaction. **(This award is given out to Management staff only)**

Rising Star Award: This award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated an extraordinary performance within their first 24 months of employment. The individual established a robust enthusiasm for the field of aging services from the very beginning of their employment. They have consistently demonstrated a strong work ethic, commitment, initiative, leadership and the ability to be a team player. This person routinely goes above and beyond what is expected.

Community Impact Award: This award is given to an organization for participation in outreach to the greater community beyond the organization's own walls or core mission. The organization shall have created or participated in a program/effort that has had a positive impact on both the community at-large and the organization. The action(s) taken by the organization measurably met a community need and demonstrates the organization's role as a contributing member of their local community.

Examples: Intergenerational programs, community education efforts, donation of facility resources for community use, outreach to at-risk youth, resident-led volunteer service projects or any voluntary activities designed to address local community needs, etc.

NEW AWARDS From last YEAR:

Volunteer of the Year: This award will be present to a resident, group, individual or outside volunteer of a LeadingAge Illinois Member organization. This honoree will have performed significant volunteer services to residents of clients of a member organization.

Board Member of the Year: This award is bestowed on an individual who has served unselfishly and with distinction on the board of trustees of LeadingAge Illinois member organization. The honoree will have contributed a significant amount of time and effort toward the betterment of his or her organization and to enrich the lives of older adults.

Leading Life Award: This award celebrates a resident or client of a LeadingAge Illinois member organization who has demonstrated an extraordinary attitude and level of resilience as they have grown older. The honoree transforms views on aging through their continued learning, engagement and contributions. They inspire others to re-define their perspectives of "old" and to embrace aging, advocating for all to enjoy life no matter their age and setting an example for others to aspire to.

Questions? Please contact info@leadingageil.org