



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

Mary Lynn Kasunic, Anita Huff and Nancy C. Peace Recognized for Outstanding Leadership

At the opening general session of its annual conference July 19, 2009, in Minneapolis, MN, n4a announced the winners of its new prestigious *n4a Excellence in Leadership Awards*. Mary Lynn Kasunic and Anita Huff received the awards for their outstanding innovation and leadership in preparing their communities for the rapidly growing older population. Nancy C. Peace was honored with the 2009 n4a President's Award presented by President Lynn Kellogg during the general session on Monday, July 20.

n4a established the *Excellence in Leadership Awards* to recognize the contributions of outstanding leaders from Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and Title VI Native American aging programs in advocacy, policy and program development, services and systems design, planning for livable communities and cultural enhancement. This year's winners were chosen from 10 finalists, all of whom displayed outstanding leadership in their local regions.

Mary Lynn Kasunic was honored with the 2009 *n4a Excellence in Leadership Award* in the Area Agency on Aging category. Ms. Kasunic has been the President and CEO of the Area Agency on Aging in Phoenix, AZ since 1990. Her ability to foresee difficulties ahead resulting from the recent economic downturn allowed her to retain full employment and staff all client services despite a \$1 million reduction in state funding. Ms. Kasunic created a unique suicide prevention program called ElderVention®. Recognizing there were very few referral options for psychological treatment for older adults, she led the agency in becoming licensed as an outpatient clinic, and in 2008 the agency began seeing clients. Despite a fire that damaged the AAA's offices in late 2008, she managed to continue operations amidst both demolition and reconstruction. She is a true visionary and advocate for the aging populations.

The 2009 *n4a Excellence in Leadership Award* in the category of Title VI Native American Aging Program was presented to Anita Huff of Blue Lake, CA. She has been the director of the local Title VI program since 1998. Ms. Huff helped forge a strong partnership between the Blue Lake Rancheria and the Area 1 Agency on Aging. As a result of this thriving collaboration, the agencies have established a "Native Specific" Caregiver Training and Registry Program. In addition, she created a "New" Congregate Meal site at another local reservation, Table Bluff, and will be assisting elders with Medicare Part D. Ms. Huff is a tireless advocate for the elders in her community and has the enthusiastic support of the local AAA.

Well known throughout the Aging Services Network, Ms. Peace has dedicated her career to the Aging Services Network and to the needs of older persons. She is one of the "original" AAA Directors, assuming a newly created position soon after the 1973 amendments to the Older Americans Act that created Area Agencies on Aging. She held the position as the Director of the Upper Cumberland Area Agency on Aging and Disability in Cookeville, TN, for more than 31 years and remains actively engaged today with the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, a multi-service agency that also serves as an Older Americans Act funded service provider. From 1986 to 1988, Ms. Peace served as President of n4a, held a Special Assignment to the Commissioner on Aging assisting with the design and implementation of the National Eldercare Campaign and also served in a myriad of other leadership positions helping to build a society that values and supports people as they age

"Those of us working on the front lines of aging know the harsh realities and the growing enormity of our jobs," said Sandy Markwood, n4a CEO. "Providing more services to a rapidly growing aging population with limited resources requires the best and brightest leaders who have vision, resourcefulness and creativity. We congratulate Ms. Kasunic, Ms. Huff, and Ms. Peace on this well-deserved honor."