

For Immediate Release

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**Stars of Assisted Living Honored at the 2023 Massachusetts Assisted Living Association (Mass-ALA) Excellence Awards Dinner**

**(August 3, 2023)** – The Massachusetts Assisted Living Association (Mass-ALA) honored an outstanding group of assisted living associates representing every level of the industry at their annual Excellence Awards Dinner on August 1st. Individuals, nominated by their peers, have demonstrated a desire to make a positive difference in the lives of residents and stand out as role models in the industry. Awardees included Eitan Berechman, Scott Butler, Meghan Colantonio, Jennifer Gelinas, Larry Gerber, Frank Gorman, Ansu Kinteh, David Price, Kathleen Richard, Joe Samartano, and George Silvia.

“We are honored to recognize the 2023 Excellence Award winners for their commitment and dedication to ensuring the highest quality of life for older adults that exemplifies dignity, respect, and independence,” said Brian Doherty, President and CEO of Mass-ALA. “Their involvement in their communities has been exemplary and embodies the core values of assisted living. We are proud to have such enthusiastic and committed individuals in the industry as we continue our efforts to provide a high standard of care across the commonwealth.”

This year’s awards were hosted in person at the Best Western Hotel in Marlborough with a special guest appearance from Jackie MacMullan, an award-winning writer and broadcaster for the Boston Globe and ESPN, to assist in honoring the awardees.

**Eitan Berechman, Volunteer at Hebrew Senior Life, honored with Volunteer Award**. Eitan has been a volunteer at Hebrew Senior Life for numerous years and happily dedicates his time, talents, and kind spirit to enhancing the quality of life for residents. Coming to the residence every week, rain or shine, he brightens the space by playing the piano and drums, taking residents to appointments, bringing residents their newspapers and packages, serving food, and leading community events. Eitan treats every resident with respect and care and truly makes a difference in the community.

**Scott Butler, Chef and Dining Service Director at Bridges by EPOCH at Mashpee, honored with the Dining Services Award**. Scott makes it his mission to deliver a culinary experience that delights the senses, paying attention to plating details, and preparing nutritious foods with seasoning and textures that please the palate. He pays attention to residents’ likes and dislikes and notes the foods and recipes that bring them joy. Dining service team members also appreciate his fairness and incredible work ethic. His hard work, creativity, and passion are visible on each plate that is served, and residents always delight in the sweet aromas that greet them every morning and throughout the day. Scott delivers not only a great dining experience but truly cares about how his meals enhance the comfort and happiness of every resident.

**Meghan Colantonio, Sales Manager at Brookdale of Attleboro, honored with the Sales and Marketing Award**. Meghan is an outstanding sales manager at Brookdale of Attleboro but does so much more than her job description entails. She is a selfless individual who will help residents hang pictures on their walls, take them on shopping trips, help the kitchen staff, and clean bathrooms. Every one of our residents and staff members knows her name, and whenever anyone is in need, they know to call her. Meghan is a friend, and most would consider her family, to the staff and residents of our community.

**Jennifer Gelinas, Resident Engagement Director at Autumn Glen at Dartmouth, honored with the Employee Leadership Award**. In just a year’s time, Jennifer has revitalized Autumn Glen at Dartmouth with her ideas, stellar execution, and thoughtful follow-up. Her outreach efforts have opened the doors to new experiences and opportunities for our residents by creating and strengthening relationships with the local elementary school, local Natural Reserve Trust, Humane Society, and Audubon Society. Jennifer has also enhanced internal programming with a ‘Taste of the Season’ weekly cooking program, and a pet photoshoot day, as well as shaping common spaces to feel like home and connecting directly with families to understand which programs individual residents might enjoy best.

**The late Larry Gerber, President and CEO of EPOCH and Mass-ALA Board Chair, honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award**. Larry spent over 40 years dedicating his career to working with and developing senior living and care options for older adults. He founded EPOCH Senior Living with the goal of redefining the senior healthcare and assisted living industry in New England and under his leadership, high-quality skilled healthcare centers in the Boston area transformed into a regionally focused, comprehensive senior living organization. Larry became Chair of the Mass-ALA Board of Directors in 2021 and worked with state and federal officials to positively impact legislation affecting senior living.

**Frank Gorman, Maintenance Director at Stone Hill at Andover, honored with the Facilities and Maintenance Award**. Frank is a responsive and creative problem solver guaranteeing that jobs are completed efficiently and under budget. He prioritizes taking care of the community and ensures that residents are comfortable and feel at home by getting to know them and creating positive relationships with the residents’ families. He is a team player and has a humorous and empathetic nature. Frank has also repeatedly demonstrated his proactive nature by connecting with the Fire Department to add fire lanes to aid emergency vehicles and meeting with the Towns Planning Boards to secure adequate parking as the community grew.

**Ansu Kinteh, Resident Care Director at Cohen Florence Levine Estates, honored with the Care and Wellness Award**. Ansu goes above and beyond to keep residents safe and smiling. You can find him dancing with residents at concerts, showing videos on the big screen, and playing games with everyone. He is very thorough in all his evaluations and assessments, taking time to understand each resident on a clinical and personal level. As a teammate, he listens to everyone’s points of view and will even bring donuts and coffee if he notices staff are tired. He is not just a Resident Care Director; he is the heart and soul of Cohen Florence Levine Estates.

**David Price, Executive Director of Benchmark Senior Living Leominster Crossings, honored with the Executive Director Award**. David is a distinguished leader who has strengthened the residence’s operational processes, contributed to a strong audit score, elevated department heads, and built a solid associate workforce. He is known for being kindhearted, generous, and a great musician, constantly entertaining residents and staff with his guitar playing. He also makes it a point to get to know every resident and their families and make time for associates. He cares deeply about the community at Benchmark and just a few months ago performed the Heimlich maneuver on a resident successfully clearing the respiratory track without complication. David is a vibrant personality with a great analytical mind and unparalleled dedication to the residents and community.

**Kathleen Richard, Life Enrichment Coordinator at Wingate Residences at Haverhill, honored with the Activities Service Award**. Kathleen is a compassionate, kind, and creative soul who has worked in assisted living for 17 years and has been with the residence for two years. She develops and implements unique programs for residents, is the lead programmer for all art-related programs and strives to make all activities inclusive and accessible regardless of cognitive or physical ability. “Helping Hands”, is one such program Kathleen created with accessibility and inclusion in mind that allows residents to assist with the preparation of various festivities and events.

**Joe Samartano, Resident at Laurelwood at The Pinehills, honored with the Resident Spirit Award**. Joe embodies the Northbridge motto of “Live Well, Love Life”. Joe joined the residence when he was caring for his late wife who was living with Alzheimer’s disease and found fulfillment volunteering within the community and assisting with activities. As a widower and person with deep empathy, joy, and knowledge, he started a weekly Resident Grief Support Group helping make a difference in the lives of many. He is also the Chair of the Resident Council and listens earnestly to any input and concerns raised by fellow residents.

**George Silvia, Engagement Director at Stonebridge at Burlington, honored with the Program Innovation Award.** George is a lover of history and has a passion for creating unique and successful programs. The program he developed, Hometown History, engages new residents after they have first moved in and gives them the chance to connect with others by sharing where they came from and learning about the current residents. It also helps associates understand the residents better in terms of their past and the things they care about. The program promotes purpose, raises self-esteem, and lets residents feel welcome and accepted during a time of transition when they need it most.

**About Mass-ALA**

The Massachusetts Assisted Living Association ([Mass-ALA](https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/CfS9CW6BBZTvl24cxKgST?domain=mass-ala.org/)) is the voice of assisted living in Massachusetts, representing 245+ certified assisted living communities of all sizes and service models across the Commonwealth, providing information and education, and advocating on behalf of members and the older adults they serve. A not-for-profit association dedicated to professionally operated assisted living residences that provide housing and services for individuals with varied needs and income levels, Mass-ALA promotes a model of care which treats all residents with dignity, provides privacy, and encourages independence and freedom of choice.

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