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Susan C. Real, Chief Executive Officer

PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE: East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, Inc. honored individuals and agencies who help to "Champion Your Health – How Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs Promote Eating!"

East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, Inc. (ECIAAA) held their 54th Annual Meeting and Luncheon on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, in Bloomington at the DoubleTree Hotel and Conference Center and honored individuals and agencies in the field of aging.

2026 Governor's Engaging Aging Award *Lindsey Communities – Lindsey Life* received the Governor's Engaging Aging Award, presented by Lisa Zuurbier, Division of Community Relations and Outreach Manager, Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA). Receiving the award for *Lindsey Communities* included Mike Berkes, Director of Program Development and Laura Edwards, Vice President of Home & Community-Based Services. Lindsey Communities was honored for their vision and leadership in expanding critical Adult Day Services in East Central Illinois.

Dr. Arthur H. Larsen Leadership Award. The Dr. Arthur H. Larsen Leadership Award is presented each year to an individual or agency who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in advancing programs, services, and opportunities for older persons in East Central Illinois. The Leadership Award is named in honor of Dr. Arthur H. Larsen who served as the first Chairperson of the ECIAAA Corporate Board in 1974. ECIAAA honored *Lindsey Communities-Lindsey Life* for their dedication in expanding critical Adult Day Services in East Central Illinois.

Counties Served: Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, Macon, McLean, Moultrie, Piatt, Shelby, Vermilion

The East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal Statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have a right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department on Aging. For information, call the IDoA Senior HelpLine 1-800-252-8966 (Voice and TTY), or contact the Area Agency's Civil Rights Coordinator at 1-800-888-4456.

Funded by Older Americans Act and General Revenue through the Illinois Department on Aging

Special Retirement Recognition. The Illinois Department on Aging and the ECIAAA Corporate Board surprised Susan C. Real, CEO, by recognizing her leadership at ECIAAA for the past forty-one (41) years. Susan Real will retire in late January 2027. Becky Dragoo, Deputy Director, Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA), presented the IDOA Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of Ms. Real's leadership and outstanding contributions to the Illinois Agency Network. Ron Black, Chairperson, ECIAAA Corporate Board presented a special Dr. Arthur H. Larsen Leadership Award in honor of Ms. Real's dedicated service to older adults, caregivers and individuals with disabilities throughout East Central Illinois.

ECIAAA Staff Recognition. At the Annual Meeting of the ECIAAA Corporate Board, the following staff members celebrating milestones were recognized:

Kelly Coffey, Controller, celebrating fifteen (15) years of service

Celebrating ECIAAA Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs – "*Champion Your Health – How Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs Promote Healthy Eating!"* Keynote Speakers, Melanie Kluzek, Commodity Special Nutrition Programs Administrator, Illinois Department of Human Services; and, Matt Burton, Vice President of Support Services, OSF HealthCare- John W. Albrecht Medical Center St. James, celebrated ECIAAA's five (5) Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs proudly serving sixteen (16) in East Central Illinois. During FY 2025, ECIAAA nutrition programs served 140,000 congregate meals to 4,000 clients; and over 653,000 home delivered meals to over 4,200 clients.

Representatives from the following Nutrition Service Providers were honored:

Sarah Bush Lincoln Peace Meal Congregate & Home Delivered Meal Nutrition Program serving the counties of Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Moultrie, and Shelby
CRIS Health Aging Congregate & Home Delivered Meal Nutrition Program serving Vermilion County
Catholic Charities of Decatur, Meals on Wheels Home Delivered Meal Program, Diocese of Springfield, serving Macon County
Empowerment Opportunity Center, Congregate Nutrition Program, serving Macon County
OSF Peace Meal Congregate & Home Delivered Meal Nutrition Program serving the counties of Champaign, DeWitt, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean, and Piatt

ECIAAA staff, Corporate Board and Advisory Council members applaud the honorees for their leadership in advocating for, and serving older adults, their care partners, and individuals with disabilities throughout East Central Illinois.

ECIAAA is a not-for-profit organization that provides planning, coordination, advocacy and service delivery for persons aged 60+, family caregivers, and grandparents raising grandchildren and other relatives as parents, for 16 counties in East Central Illinois, including Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Iroquois, Livington, Macon, McLean, Moultrie, Piatt, Shelby and Vermilion counties.