



News Release

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PROGRAM INITIATED BY FORMER FIRST LADY HONORED BY COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL ON AGING

(RICHMOND, Va.) — A caregiver program at Williamsburg’s Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health modeled on the Rosalynn Carter Institute on Caregiving’s signature program won the top 2013 “Best Practices” award from the Commonwealth Council on Aging.

The council, which advises the Governor on issues affecting the 1.4 million Virginians age 60 and older, acknowledges organizations whose innovative programs can be replicated across the Commonwealth. The awards are announced each year in May, which Gov. Bob McDonnell has proclaimed as [Older Virginians Month](#).

The year’s top award of \$5,000 honors the [Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health](#) for its [“Caring for You, Caring for Me,”](#) a 10-hour, five-session course to help improve the care and quality of life of older adults and people with disabilities. The council will present the award at 3 p.m., May 20, at The Gardens at Warwick Forest, one of Riverside’s Continuing Care Retirement Communities in Newport News.



Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter and Christine Jensen, CE AHL’s Director of Health Services Research, at the Rosalynn Carter Institute on Caregiving’s 25th anniversary summit in October.
(Courtesy C. Jensen)

The program, launched by the Carter institute in 1996, aims to address the needs of family and professional caregivers by bringing them together to discuss common issues, share ideas and gain a better understanding of the other’s perspective on what it means to be a caregiver.

“I am very proud that the ‘Caring for You, Caring for Me’ program was initiated out of the work here at the Rosalynn Carter Institute in Georgia, and after more than 15 years in existence, is a vital program today,” said the institute’s executive director, Leisa Easom. “Christy Jensen, Director of Community and Health Sciences Research, and Executive Director Rick Jackson of the Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health have improved the lives of many Virginians and their caregivers. I offer my congratulations to Rick and Christy for their excellent work and for their selection for the top 2013 Commonwealth Council on Aging Best Practices award.”

Through the “Caring for You, Caring for Me” program, the Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health has served more than 211 caregivers, in 13 different venues, through direct participation in the program. An estimated 2,800 care recipients benefit each year, with more than 6,630 recipients since the program began, given that many caregivers care for more than one person at a time.

“The Riverside group designed and built a very effective program for training a significant number of caregivers, both professional and non-professional,” said awards committee chair Dr. Richard Lindsay. “By also training individuals to be facilitators to conduct future training, this will help sustain the program and continue to make available better trained caregivers for older Virginians.”

“As the Commonwealth prepares for the coming ‘Age Wave’ of vintage Virginians and the corresponding demand for caregivers, we need programs that use innovative approaches to enhance education, support and advocacy for family, volunteer and professional caregivers,” said Commissioner Jim Rothrock of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services.

A second place award of \$3,000 was given to the [Growing Younger](#) partnership of the YMCA of Greater Richmond; Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging; and United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg. The Growing Younger program aims to improve the well-being of older adults so they may live with dignity in their homes and communities for as long as possible. The program includes information about making healthy lifestyle choices, exercise and caregiver support and respite. The award will be presented at 1:30 p.m., May 21, at Senior Connections.

A \$2,000 award for third place was awarded to the Community Dialogue on Financial Abuse among Older Adults by the [New River Valley Agency on Aging](#) in Pulaski. The program was developed by the Elder Justice Coalition of the New River Valley to engage community leaders, professionals and citizens in preventing and responding to elder financial abuse. The council will present the award at 11:45 a.m., May 23, at the Warm Hearth Village’s Village Center, Blacksburg.

This is the first year that Dominion Resources has supported the Best Practices Awards. “The Council thanks Dominion Resources for its generous sponsorship support of the 2013 awards and looks forward to ongoing collaboration,” said Council Chairman Roberto Quinones.

The council gave honorable mentions to the following:

- The [F.R.E.E. Foundation](#) Equipment Reuse/Recycling and Gifting Program, of Roanoke, helps Virginians achieve independence through mobility when they have no other way to attain their independence.
- The [Fairfax County Family Caregiver Support Program](#) provides services and supports to assist family caregivers.
- [The Senior Connections Family Caregivers Support Seminar](#) provides, at no cost, one- or two-day personalized programs to provide information, skills and knowledge for enrolled family members and volunteer caregivers.

For more about the Commonwealth Council on Aging's Best Practices Awards, visit www.vda.virginia.gov/council.asp.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit www.vadars.org.