



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**



June 22, 2015

Contact: Katie Mintz  
Communications  
651-431-5605  
[Katie.Mintz@state.mn.us](mailto:Katie.Mintz@state.mn.us)

## **Achievement in aging, disability services honored**

*Odyssey awards recognize people, organizations throughout Minnesota*

Two individuals and four organizations were recognized for improving and enriching the lives of older adults and people with disabilities at the 2015 Age & Disabilities Odyssey Conference held June 15-16 in Duluth.

“These awards winners inspire future innovations in long-term services and supports by showing us how to improve life today for people with disabilities and older adults,” said Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson.

The 2015 Odyssey conference award winners were as follows:

- **The LGBTQ Organizing Group**, a group of current and former Twin Cities caregivers, received the Community Award for creating a multi-cultural, intergenerational support group for LGBTQ caregivers. The group is now looking to replicate its caregiver support group elsewhere in the Twin Cities and beyond.
- **Charlie Lakin** of Minneapolis received the Policy Award for his work over 40 years to improve disability policy, not only in Minnesota but nationally and internationally. Lakin directed the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota’s Institute on Community Integration and also worked with the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.
- **The Lutheran Home Association**, based in Belle Plaine, received the Innovation Award for helping to develop sensory technology for the home that enhances independence, safety and health management for older adults. Using lessons learned from this project, the Lutheran Home Association developed further technology tools to meet the needs of people with memory loss and to support direct care staff with trainings, documentation and managing their own stress and overall health.
- **Jerry Mellum**, a Plymouth resident and native of Jackson, Minn., who is senior planning analyst in the Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department, received the Service Award. This award recognizes Mellum for being a champion for people with disabilities and person-centered thinking and an expert in individualized housing options.

Mellum helped create a housing options resource guide for people with disabilities that encourages individuals to create a vision of where they want to live.

Don Samuelson, chair of the Minnesota Board on Aging, and Jean Wood, board executive director and director of DHS Aging and Adult Services, also presented a special Board on Aging award to two nursing facilities that have been exemplary partners in the Return to Community initiative. **Madonna Towers of Rochester** and **Inter-Faith Care Center of Carlton** were honored for working with the board's Senior LinkAge Line to each move 50 individuals out of nursing homes to homes of their own. Return to Community has helped more than 2,200 people to move home from nursing homes over the past five years.

The Odyssey Conference, sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Board on Aging, drew more than 1,300 participants this year and focused on bringing person-centered thinking into practice in services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities.

*Editor's note: Pictures of award winners may be downloaded below.*

[LGBTQ Organizing Group photo](#)

From left to right: Lisa Albrecht, Jay Pearson, Rosanna Hudgins, Xay Yang, Kirsten Johnson and Ron Joki

[Charlie Lakin photo](#)

[The Lutheran Home Association photo](#)

Catherine Berghoff, director of grant resource development and program administration

[Jerry Mellum photo](#)

From left to right: Jean Wood, director of DHS Aging and Adult Services; Jerry Mellum, senior planning analyst, Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department; Alex Bartolic, director of DHS Disability Services.

[Inter-Faith Care Center photo](#)

From left to right: Val Luttrell, social service designee, and Jeff Gookins, social services director

[Madonna Towers of Rochester photo](#)

From left to right: Peggy Bruns, social worker; and Beth Redalen, assistant administrator