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Council on Aging executive named Health Care Heroes finalist

Arlene de Silva, Chief Operating Officer for Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio, has been honored as a finalist for a Health Care Heroes award from the Cincinnati Business Courier.



Ms. de Silva was selected in the category of Innovations for founding Council on Aging Learning Advantages (COALA®). An award-winning program, COALA has three parts:

- Career training for home health aides
- Education and support for family caregivers
- Program for businesses and employees who need help balancing work and caregiving

Health care Heroes honors people who have made an impact on health care through their concern for patients, research and inventions, management skills, innovative programs, or service to the poor and uninsured.

Ms. de Silva started COALA in 2000 to respond to a growing demand for trained home health aides. More than 1,000 people have graduated from the program since it began. It exceeds national standards for job retention with 80 percent of aides still on the job 16 months after graduating.

Two years later, she and Cindy Fischer, Council on Aging Manager of Caregiver Programs, developed a companion program in which registered nurses visit family caregivers in their homes to provide information, demonstrations, and support. The visits are offered as a public service. In post-visit surveys, 98 percent of caregivers report the program had a positive impact on their life.

In 2006, COALA Eldercare Plus was created to help working caregivers and their employers.

A resident of Mt. Lookout, Ms. de Silva has worked at Council on Aging for 30 years, previously serving as Chief Financial Officer.

Most recently, she spearheaded efforts to bring Yamaha's "Clavinova Connection" to southwestern Ohio. The program uses music-making to reduce loneliness and improve well-being among older adults.

About Council on Aging

Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio (COA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults and their families.

Founded in 1970, COA is designated by the state of Ohio as the Area Agency on Aging for Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton and Warren counties. COA plans, coordinates, funds and administers programs for an area that is home to more than 252,000 adults age 60 and older.

Through its programs and services, COA promotes choice, independence, dignity and well-being of older adults through a range of community-based services that help them remain in their homes for as long as possible.

For Answers on Aging:

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