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HCA Presents Home Health Aide and Home Telehealth Awards in Honor of National Home Care Month

The Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) held an awards ceremony at its Clinical and Technology Conference on November 5 in honor of National Home Care Month where HCA paid tribute to home care clinical staff Denise Fitzgerald, James Wilson and Rodney Clements for their commitment to providing compassionate, exemplary in-home patient care.

"HCA is proud to honor these three exceptional individuals – Ms. Fitzgerald, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Clements – who go above and beyond the already extraordinary nature of their calling to make a lasting difference in the lives of patients," said HCA President Joanne Cunningham. "Though their service to patients is outstanding, their individual stories of dedication and compassion reflect the broader mission of all front-line home care staff."

[See photos of the award winners on the last page of this release.]

Ms. Fitzgerald and Mr. Wilson received the **Home Health Aide of the Year Awards**:

- **Denise Fitzgerald of Troy, NY-based Eddy Visiting Nurse Association** has been a dedicated home health aide at Eddy Home Care for 16 years. A blind client depends on Ms. Fitzgerald to not only assist with her bathing and grooming, but also to "be her eyes." Ms. Fitzgerald arranges her patient's clothing so that she has matching outfits available, keeps her client's apartment clean and organized so accidents can be prevented, and keeps up a lively conversation when working with her client. Ms. Fitzgerald has been a mentor for newly trained home health aides and has acted as an excellent role model, routinely working more than 40 hours per week. In the spring, Ms. Fitzgerald only missed two days of work after a fire in her apartment building, which forced her family to live in hotels without belongings for weeks. In her nomination, clients and families had much to say about Ms. Fitzgerald: "She just jumps right in and has a professional, quiet manner"; "I could not manage without her"; "She gives 110%"; and "Denise helps me to keep my husband at home with me."
- **James Wilson of Bayside, NY-based St. Mary's Community Care Professionals** has been employed by St. Mary's since January and currently provides services to a 12-year-old child with special needs. On a recent supervisory visit to the patient's home, Mr. Wilson was observed assisting the young boy with his adaptive bicycle. This meaningful gesture demonstrated Mr. Wilson's appreciation for the patient's ability to grasp a sense independence and pride of accomplishment. The patient's mother noted: "The first time he took my son out on his adaptive bicycle, tears came to my eyes because my son was riding for the first time in his life – I never dreamed that I would see this day." The young patient himself included a letter of recommendation with Mr. Wilson's nomination, praising him as one of his best aides. "I know that he is not family, but deep down in my heart, he is like a big brother to me," the young patient wrote.

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In addition to the home health aide awards, HCA also honored a **Nurse Telehealth Champion** at this year's award ceremony, recognizing a nurse from an HCA member agency who was instrumental in implementing home care technology with proven results in improved quality of care, serving as a role model for others in furthering telehealth.

"Considering the great promise of home telehealth technology, HCA felt it was important to recognize a caregiver whose resourcefulness and drive for innovation is reflected in his or her initiative to enhance and promote the use of disease-management technology for the betterment of patient health," Cunningham said.

Home telehealth at-a-glance

Home telehealth includes a range of technologies that allow home care clinical staff to monitor patients remotely through video or data links as a supplement to routine in-home visits. This exciting, patient-centered technology encourages patients to invest in their own disease management, extending the eyes, ears and touch of home care. It also reduces hospitalizations, the incidence of emergent care and the overall cost of health services utilization. In fact, a recent study by economist Robert Litan found that **widespread use of remote-monitoring systems could cut the nation's health care costs by \$197 billion over the next 25 years.** HCA and its provider members throughout New York State have been at the forefront of home telehealth policy development, most notably through our work with the State in structuring a home telehealth rate model under Medicaid for high-risk patients.

This year's **Nurse Telehealth Champion of the Year** is:

- **Rodney Clements, LPN, of the Livingston County Department of Health, for his work championing Livingston County's telehealth program.**

Mr. Clements has been a dedicated and hardworking nurse for Livingston County for eight years. He is a Vietnam veteran and a former computer engineer for Kodak. His nursing skills are excellent and he stays current with issues in the cardiac world. Mr. Clements continues to promote the telemedicine program at Livingston County to the more resistant staff and keeps the doctors informed of its importance and effectiveness. He has witnessed telemedicine patients take a remarkable interest in their disease and in their own recovery, allowing people to see how their lifestyle choices make a difference in their cardiac status. Patients have purchased scales, BP cuffs and notebooks to keep record of their daily vital signs, and they bring the data with them to their visits with doctors. Mr. Clements has always gone the extra mile for his patients, from taking them fishing on his day off, to picking them up groceries and medication to stopping for a patient's favorite coffee. His kindness and caring is worn on his sleeve and his love for nursing is shown by the way he lives his life.

Considered to be a less-costly alternative to care provided in the nursing home or hospital setting, home care encompasses a broad spectrum of health, therapeutic and social services delivered at home to persons with disabilities as well as patients who are chronically ill or recovering from an illness. Home care patients include newborns requiring maternal-infant care services, children in need of therapy services, elderly patients whose chronic medical condition requires skilled nursing care or home health aide assistance, technology-dependent patients who depend on life-sustaining home medical equipment, and many others.

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From left: James Wilson, Rodney Clements and Denise Fitzgerald at HCA's Awards Reception at the Holiday Inn-Wolf Road in Albany, November 5, 2008

To receive a copy of these photos for publication, please contact HCA's Communications Director Roger Noyes at (518) 810-0665 or rnoyes@hcanys.org