

Maine Council on Aging Recognizes Inspired Leaders
2024 award recipients to be honored at Change AGent Summit

Today, the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) announced the 2024 award recipients who will be honored for their inspired and sustained leadership at the [CHANGE AGent Summit](#), on September 25, 2024.

“Our annual awards shine a spotlight on Maine leaders who are quietly dedicating part or all of their careers to making Maine a healthier, safer, more inclusive place to live and work for older Mainers,” said Jess Maurer, Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging. “These honorees have had an impressive impact on the lives of older Maines, and we honor them to ensure Maine people know about their important work and leadership.”

The **Lasting Legacy Award** recognizes and celebrates the sustained leadership of people whose commitment, ideals, and actions throughout their careers have brought about lasting and positive change to the lives of older Mainers. The 2024 honoree is Marilyn R. Gugliucci of Kennebunk.

Marilyn R. Gugliucci, Professor and Director of Geriatrics Education and Research at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, is an innovative and pioneering Maine leader who has been recognized nationally and internationally for her work. For three decades she has inspired countless health professional students to change their ideas about aging and provide older-person informed care. She has developed and launched highly effective [immersion](#) and [applied learning programs](#) that have guided so many students into the field of geriatrics. Marilyn also integrated advocacy into the Maine Geriatrics Conference, making advocates and health professionals more effective. She is now addressing ageism in healthcare nationally, and attributes this work, in large part, to being a MCOA founder and Board member.

Special this year, we are also awarding a **Lasting Legislative Legacy Award**. This award recognizes and celebrates the sustained leadership of a Legislator whose commitment, ideals, and actions throughout their legislative careers have brought about lasting and positive change to the health, safety, and economic security of older Mainers. Jess Fay of Raymond is our honoree.

Representative Jess Fay is honored for her sustained efforts from 2017 through 2024 to improve the lives of older people in Maine. During this time, Rep. Fay worked tirelessly to increase access to supports and services for older people, grow the direct care workforce, and increase economic security for older Mainers. She Chaired the Commission to Study Long Term Care Workforce Issues, and sought implementation of many recommendations, including higher wages for workers. She also sought and secured increases in eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program. For six years, she educated her colleagues on issues impacting older Mainers as Chair of the Legislative Caucus on Aging. She also inspired the creation of [Age Friendly Raymond](#).

The **Legislator of the Year Award** recognizes and celebrates the sustained efforts of legislative leaders who actively champion legislative initiatives that improve the health, safety, and economic security of older Mainers and/or increase and improve access to quality aging services. This year, we honor the whole 131st Health & Human Services Committee.

The Members of the **131st Joint Standing Legislative Committee Health & Human Services** are honored for their collective leadership in unanimously recommending increases in eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program and unanimously defending against the repeal of these increases. The Committee is also honored for its long-standing commitment to ensuring older Mainers can gain access to the supports and services they need, including Meals on Wheels,

direct care services across the continuum of care, and caregiver supports. This award celebrates a long history of this committee consistently working across the aisle to find solutions to the challenges faced by older Mainers.

The **Trailblazing Advocate Award** recognizes and celebrates the sustained contributions of trailblazers whose passion, actions, and advocacy have made Maine a better place for us all to age with dignity, health, purpose, and security. The 2024 honoree is Mary Lou Ciolfi of Bath.

Mary Lou Ciolfi is being honored for her sustained efforts to reduce ageism in Maine and nationally, especially for her focus on reducing elderspeak as a form of ageism, and to improve the lives of older Mainers through research and learning. Mary Lou is the co-director of the Consortium for Aging Policy Research and Analysis and is a facilitator at the National Center to Reframe Aging. She has led Reframing Aging efforts for several years in Maine and was on the design team that created the MCOA's Leadership Exchange on Ageism. Mary Lou is passionate about understanding why we are ageist, masterful in guiding us in knowing how to effectively disrupt it, and is a pivotal leader in helping us end ageism in Maine.

The **Douglas O. Wilson Rising Tide Leadership Award**, awarded in partnership with Southern Maine Agency on Aging and Community Health Options, recognizes and celebrates the sustained efforts of people who lift and inspire others to implement innovative solutions to challenges faced by older Mainers through collaborative partnerships, shared leadership and/or community building initiatives. The 2024 recipient is Jean Saunders of Saco.

For nearly a decade, **Jean Saunders** has inspired hundreds of volunteers to take impressive action to build one of Maine's most advanced and effective lifelong communities, [Age Friendly Saco](#), making it possible for older people to remain in Saco as they age. She has been a tireless mentor to so many other community leaders starting in or struggling with this work. She is relentless in her efforts to build effective partnerships to implement solutions to thorny problems like housing and transportation. We honor her for her vision and tenacity in helping to establish a home sharing program in Maine, Nesterly. Whether helping older people access the beach or use technology to stay safer at home, she has inspired us all by showing us what's possible.

The **Business Excellence Award** recognizes and celebrates the sustained efforts of Maine employers to implement strategic practices and policies that value and sustain the contributions of older workers and support family caregivers. **In 2024 we honor the State of Maine.**

In 2023, the State of Maine became only the 2nd state in the country to become a certified [Age Friendly Employer](#), a considerable process that requires an employer to review and update its policies and procedures, ultimately having an audit before they are certified. The state explicitly includes age in their sustained commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, something only a small percentage of employers nationwide include. The state also provided educational opportunities to all state employees on ageism and the benefits of age-positivity. State leaders are continuing the work of building a workplace culture that supports a diverse multi-generational workforce that intentionally values older workers.

These inspiring leaders and business will be honored at the MCOA's annual Change AGent Summit on September 25th at the Pineland Farms. **Press credentials offered to any reporter wishing to cover these events.** Summit registration information is found [here](#).

About Maine Council on Aging: The Maine Council on Aging is a broad, multi-disciplinary network of more than 135 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older Mainers working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives in our homes and community settings. For more information: www.mainecouncilonaging.org