



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Jess Maurer, Executive Director
jmaurer@mainecouncilonaging.org
207-380-3305

**Maine Council on Aging Honors Leaders
Transforming the Experience of Aging in Maine
2026 award recipients to be honored at [Change AGent Summit](#)**

PORTLAND, Maine — The Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) today announced its 2026 award recipients, recognizing six leaders and organizations whose work is helping make Maine a healthier, more equitable, and age positive place for us all to live and age.

The honorees will be celebrated at the MCOA's Change AGent Summit, [*Beyond Longevity: Closing the Health and Wellness Gap*](#), on September 30th at the Abromson Center on the University of Southern Maine's Portland campus.

"What connects this year's honorees is their ability to imagine what is possible and then make change happen," said Jess Maurer, Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging. "They are changing public policy, improving access to justice and care, building stronger communities, advancing health equity, and challenging ageism. Their leadership reminds us that it takes all of us to transform the experience of aging in Maine."

Jaye Martin - 2026 Lasting Legacy Award

Jaye Martin is being honored for a career dedicated to protecting the rights, safety, and well-being of older Mainers. Guided by a vision that older people should have access to a statewide provider with deep expertise in elder law, Jaye built exactly that, making Legal Services for Maine Elders a unique and trusted front door for older Mainers facing complex legal challenges. She also co-created Maine's Council for Elder Abuse Prevention, led the creation of Maine's Elder Justice Roadmap, and led the Elder Justice Coordinating Partnership, bringing coordination and urgency to Maine's response to elder abuse. Her legacy will endure well beyond her remarkable career.

Izzy Ostrowski and Regina Phillips - 2026 Harden Trailblazing Award

This year, MCOA recognizes two leaders whose work is making visible the experiences and voices of communities of older people who have too often been overlooked.

Izzy Ostrowski is being honored for her sustained leadership in creating and expanding opportunities and safe spaces for older LGBTQ+ people to learn, connect, contribute, and build community. As EqualityMaine's Director of the Network for Older Adults and Community Engagement, Izzy has helped ensure that the lived experiences of older LGBTQ+ people are heard, understood, and reflected in efforts to improve aging in Maine. Through this work, Izzy is increasing the visibility and inclusion of older LGBTQ+ people and helping shape a Maine where we can all age with dignity, health, purpose, and security.

Regina Phillips, co-founder of Cross Cultural Community Services, is being honored for her sustained efforts to advance health equity for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPoC) Elders and ensure their needs and experiences are intentionally included in the design and delivery of care and support services. Regina has helped providers and community leaders learn directly from the lived experiences of BIPoC Elders while building stronger, more trusting relationships between providers and these communities. Her leadership is helping turn those relationships into solutions that advance health equity and improve the experience of aging in Maine.

Speaker Ryan Fecteau - 2026 Legislator of the Year

Speaker of the House Ryan Fecteau of Biddeford is being honored for his sustained leadership on behalf of older Mainers, family care partners, and care workers. Throughout his legislative career, Speaker Fecteau has championed critical investments in Meals on Wheels, family caregiver supports, housing, hunger prevention, and better wages for essential care workers. Grounded in a personal understanding of care work, he has consistently used his leadership to strengthen the systems that help older Mainers live healthy, secure lives with the care and support they need.

MaineHealth Center for Health Improvement - 2026 Business Excellence Award

MaineHealth's former Center for Health Improvement, now part of MaineHealth's Population and Community Health Department, is being honored for working to disrupt ageism and making age positivity an intentional part of its work to improve the health and well-being of older Mainers. Recognizing that ageism can affect us in the workplace, exam room, and community, MaineHealth has invested in education, leadership development, and culture and systems change. From specialized training on ageism, to creating teams focused on improving the experiences of older employees and patients, this work is helping create conditions where older people can live healthier lives and older workers are valued for their contributions.

Craig White - 2026 Douglas O. Wilson Rising Tide Leadership Award

Craig White of Craig White Consulting is being honored for helping build, grow, and sustain a culture change movement in Maine and beyond that is reshaping our collective experience of living and aging. In 2021, Craig led the design of the Leadership Exchange on Ageism (LEA), helping the MCOA create a groundbreaking leadership program that has become a catalyst for culture change and engaged more than 500 leaders across the country. Since then, Craig has stewarded LEA's continued evolution, bringing new thinking, tools, and insight to the program while supporting participants and facilitators as they turn learning into action. His thought leadership, generosity, passion, and compassion have strengthened the MCOA team, deepened LEA's impact, and helped grow a movement of leaders equipped to recognize, challenge, and ultimately end ageism.

Together, this year's honorees show what change looks like — building policies, systems, workplaces, and communities that work better for us throughout our longer lives.

The 2026 award recipients will be honored at MCOA's annual Change AGent Summit on September 30th at the Abromson Center at the University of Southern Maine. Press credentials are available for reporters wishing to cover the Summit.

About the Maine Council on Aging

The Maine Council on Aging is a broad, multi-sector network of more than 140 organizations and older people working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged and secure lives as we age in our homes and communities. MCOA uses data, strategic partnerships and the voices of those impacted to advance policy, systems and culture change and transform the experience of aging in Maine.

About the Awards

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 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.

Renamed this year in honor of MCOA Founder Don Harden, **The Harden Trailblazing Advocate Award** recognizes and celebrates the sustained contributions of community members and leaders whose passion, actions, and advocacy have made Maine a better place for us all to age with connection, health, purpose and security.

The Business Excellence Award recognizes and celebrates the sustained efforts of Maine employers to implement strategic practices, policies and priorities that value and sustain the contributions of older workers, support family caregivers, and/or create environments that meet the needs of older people, people living with dementia, and family caregivers.

The Douglas O. Wilson Rising Tide Leadership Award recognizes and celebrates the sustained efforts of people who lift and inspire others to implement innovative solutions to the challenges faced by older Mainers through collaborative partnerships, shared leadership and/or community building initiatives.

###