



## For Immediate Release

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## **Heritage Senior Living director of life enrichment finishes in top five for National Activity Professional of the Year award**

**WEST ALLIS, WISCONSIN (April 12, 2017)** – Heritage Senior Living, which operates 14 senior living communities throughout Wisconsin, is proud to announce that Patricia Durham, director of life enrichment at Heritage Senior Living's Deer Creek Village in New Berlin, Wisconsin, finished in the top five of voting for the National Activity Professional of the Year award. The award was presented last weekend at the National Association of Activity Professionals' annual conference in Denver. Durham was nominated for the national award by the Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals after winning the 2016 Activity Director of the Year award in the state of Wisconsin.

When Durham was in her mid-60s, she took a position as a part-time activity assistant for a memory care community. She had never worked in this role before, having worked previously as a legal secretary, and she was given a 15-minute overview of her job responsibilities and no formal training. Durham quickly realized the need to learn more about the position she accepted. When she found no one in her organization with formal dementia or activity training, she put herself through an online course while also working two part-time jobs and volunteering for practicum hours. This fueled Durham's passion for working with seniors living with dementia.

Durham, now 67, joined Heritage Senior Living as director of life enrichment at Heritage's Deer Creek Village community in November 2014. She has been instrumental in drawing attention to the need for more specialized training, particularly for caregivers serving memory care residents. Durham served on the Heritage committee that developed a comprehensive memory care program, which has since been rolled out company-wide to enhance the lives of patients with Alzheimer's or dementia. Durham's contributions to the program included a variety of sensory-based activities to engage residents, including cuddle therapy, preparing meals with warm citrus-scented towels to help stimulate residents' appetites, utilizing music to stimulate memories, and helping memory care residents contribute to their local community with activities like baking dog biscuits to take to a local dog shelter.

Heritage Senior Living has a special expertise in memory care services that meet the specific needs of residents with dementia or Alzheimer's, as well as their families. Heritage's approach focuses on therapy and sensory stimulation rather than over-medication. Caregivers are trained specifically to care for memory care residents, and provide engaging activities within a warm, comfortable and familiar environment. Even the design of each Heritage Senior Living community takes into account the specific needs of residents with Alzheimer's or dementia, including an uncomplicated building design allowing residents to freely stroll throughout a safe secure environment and an interior courtyard where residents can safely access the outdoors.



A strong proponent of lifelong learning, Durham is currently working toward earning 12 college credits to make her activity director provisional certification into a permanent certification. She hopes to continue working until she is at least 75 years old. Her many professional certifications in various dementia therapies, include her recent qualifications as a Teepa Snow “Positive Approach to Dementia” certified trainer and a certified engagement leader.

“Pat has been an inspiration to our residents, proving that it is never too late to reinvent yourself and that you are never too old to learn something new or achieve your goals,” said Connie Knapp, executive director of Heritage Senior Living’s Deer Creek Village. “She is extremely dedicated and determined to help both the residents she serves and the staff she works with. Heritage Senior Living is a better place because of Pat Durham.”

### **About Heritage Senior Living**

Headquartered in West Allis, Wisconsin, Heritage Senior Living was founded in 2000 by Milo Pinkerton, to provide residents with the highest quality of care possible, while at the same time promoting independence and maintaining dignity. Heritage Senior Living operates 14 senior living communities throughout Wisconsin that are home to more than 1,500 seniors. Each Heritage Senior Living community offer several levels of care, from independent living to assisted and enhanced assisted living and memory care units, so that residents can embrace life’s journey from the comfort and convenience of one location that meets all of their physical, mental and emotional needs. For more information, visit: <http://heritagesenior.com/>.

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