



EMBARGOED UNTIL FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 AT 1 P.M.

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Gina Upchurch Granted North Carolina Institute of Medicine Award for Excellence in Health Policy Leadership

RALEIGH, NC, September 7—The North Carolina Institute of Medicine presented Gina Upchurch, Founder and Executive Director of Senior PharmAssist, with the Award for Excellence in Health Policy Leadership at the NCIOM 2018 Annual Meeting today.

Upchurch was nominated for the award through an open nominations process and was selected for her impactful public health achievements. She founded Senior PharmAssist in Durham in 1994 to help older adults with limited incomes obtain and pay for the necessary medications. In 2006, with the advent of the Medicare drug benefit, the organization expanded to include Medicare insurance counseling. This work, which has been recognized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the N.C. Association of Pharmacists, has informed similar programs across the state.

“Her efforts—and those of her staff at Senior PharmAssist—have led to lower hospitalizations and ED use among the participants they serve. In addition, the work they do to help clients identify appropriate Part D plans has led to thousands of dollars in savings every year,” said Pam Silberman, a professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Gillings School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Outside Senior PharmAssist, Upchurch has also been a leader in North Carolina health policy, working to expand access to health care for uninsured residents of Durham County and advocating for seniors at the state level.

Upchurch is the fourth recipient of the annual award. Previous award winners include E. Benjamin Money, CEO of the N.C. Community Health Center Association; Allen Smart, formerly of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust; and Flo Stein, of NC DDHS’s Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services.

“It is such a joy to recognize Gina for her tireless efforts on behalf of seniors and to improve access to healthcare for all North Carolinians. In addition to her tireless leadership and advocacy, Gina knows more about Medicare than just about anybody I know,” said Adam Zolotor, President and CEO of the NCIOM

The North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) is an independent, quasi-state agency that was chartered by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1983 to provide balanced, nonpartisan information on issues of relevance to the health of North Carolina’s population. For more information, visit nciom.org.

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