

Mark Zawiski Award:

Honoring Leaders Who Make a Difference to Patients, Providers, and the NRAA

The NRAA Mark Zawiski Award for Outstanding Leadership is annual opportunity to celebrate individuals who give so generously of their time and expertise to serve the kidney community, support independent dialysis providers, make a difference in patients' lives, and help NRAA to grow and succeed.

For 15 years, the Zawiski award has recognized a variety of individuals, all outstanding in their service and dedication, but each unique in their contribution. The award has recognized pioneers like **Maureen Michael (2000)**, retired from Central Florida Kidney Centers, who was a driving force in the founding of NRAA. Like her good friend Mark Zawiski, she served in many leadership positions, including President, for both NRAA and FRAA. Maureen remained active in NRAA until her retirement, tirelessly educating and advocating for the ESRD community.

Another individual who was instrumental in establishing NRAA was 2001 honoree **Tony Messana**. Tony, still active in NRAA, was elected President twice, has served on the Board and numerous committees, and also started the NRAA PAC. He is in demand as an expert speaker at NRAA and other industry events, and has served on the Boards of Explore Transplant, the American Kidney Foundation and on the Public Policy Committee for the National Kidney Foundation.

The Award counts numerous other past presidents among its recipients. Past winners **Anne Stivers (2006)**, **Keith Mentz (2005)**, **Diane Wish (2002)**, **Larry Emerson (2012)**, **Stan Langhofer (2010)**, and **Katrina Russell (2009)** all served as President, each contributing countless hours and years of work for the NRAA Board and committees. In a group as active and vital as NRAA, serving as President means also acting as spokesperson, advocate, leader, strategic planner, weekly columnist (Renal Watch), frequent flyer (especially to DC and Baltimore), politician, visionary and alliance builder.

Some of our past presidents – Diane Wish and Keith Mentz – even answered the call multiple times, serving as NRAA President for more than one term. Others, like Larry Emerson and Stan Langhofer, have worn multiple hats as part of their service, both also serving on the RSE Board. Larry also served as NRAA Treasurer and NRAA representative on KCP committees, and he oversaw the development of NRAA's benchmarking tool.

These Past Presidents took on the kind of challenges that helped shape NRAA. Stan Langhofer started his term with a "laser focus" strategic visioning session that reinvigorated the NRAA committee structure, GPO partnership and commitment to advocacy. Keith Mentz presided over the pivotal bylaws that shifted voting membership from individuals to facilities. Under Diane Wish's leadership, NRAA launched the HIE Program for CROWNWeb, a ground breaking endeavor that continues to provide awesome benefits to NRAA and all participants.

Other Zawiski winners are notable for helping to grow the independent dialysis community. **Alex Kemp (2004)** oversaw the building of the first dialysis unit at Wake Forest. He then became owner and CEO of Health Systems Management, which built and managed dialysis facilities to

serve over 1200 patients.

The Award is not restricted to NRAA members. Many recipients have been recognized for their partnership on common goals that benefit our community of patients and providers. **Lori Hart**, President and Founder of RSN, was recognized in 2007 for her creativity and resourcefulness in providing the resources, services and “Hope” that improve the quality of life for kidney patients and their caregivers. **Dr. Barry Straube (2011)**, former director of CMS, was selected for his commitment to understanding the needs of providers and their patients, and working to make sure that CMS programs and information were designed with those needs in mind.

Ken Chen (2003), formerly of Amgen, represented the best of a vendor partner, providing industry support for NRAA education and programs.

Mike Cooper (2008), Executive Director of Renal Purchase Group, was recognized for his vision and tenacity in growing the NRAA Group Purchasing Organization to become the largest GPO in the industry, giving small and independent providers the same access and opportunities as their larger counterparts.

Many winners have helped members to anticipate and adapt to the changing world of healthcare and ESRD. Ann Stivers was renowned for her training skills. **Doug Johnson** was recognized in 2014, after he developed and led a 15 week series of webinars and two standalone workshops on Integrated Care and the ESCO application. He was also a founding developer of the NRAA Medical Directors Symposium, now in its 4th year.

In 2009, Katrina Russell led the Quality Committee in the development of Conditions for Coverage resources for NRAA members, culminating in a workshop held at the conference that remains one of the highest attended workshops in NRAA history.

There are other individuals who have served NRAA on all fronts – education, advocacy and services. **Jeff Lehman (2014)**, has served on the Board and is a frequent speaker, sharing his expertise on critical issues like cost reports. Jeff was also the first contributor to the NRAA PAC, and as President of RSE, Jeff has positioned it as the primary nationwide provider of services supporting independent, regional or community-based providers.

This recap of Zawiski winners makes it clear that there are many ways to provide outstanding leadership. Every year NRAA members are invited to submit nominees who, like these leaders, have made a difference by going above and beyond, facing challenges, creating solutions and putting the interests of NRAA and our members and patients above their own.

The nomination process takes place over July and August and nominees are voted on by the committee of past recipients. The award is presented annually at the NRAA Annual Conference held every fall.

To learn more, visit www.nraa.org.