

## **2020 MASS Outstanding Professional in the Field of Aging Award**

### **Winner: Lesley Young, Club Prior (Prior Lake)**

Lesley has worked in the field for over 15 years, she has worked for me in Prior Lake for 3 years. In that time, she has doubled the attendance at our senior center, Club Prior. The energy she has brought to the facility since day one has been tremendous. The exciting energy has been felt not only by the attendees but also with local businesses around Club Prior and those she collaborates with.

For example, Lesley has coordinated the Club Prior Pantry. She was able to secure a grant from S.H.I.P. to start the program with the purpose to give all those, ages 55+, access to free, nutritious snacks and meals without having to visit a food shelf. The pantry is also a partnership with a local non-profit, called R.O.C.K., who will be providing the food and volunteers to help maintain the pantry. This type of program is long overdue in our area, and she has been able to start it and get it off the ground.

Another very important program she has brought to Club Prior is Memory Café. This program is a resource for people with dementia and Alzheimer's and their caregivers. Once a month the café welcomes everyone to share experiences with each other, find local resources to help them through this difficult time and most importantly, to know there is support and help for them. She has worked with the local libraries, senior housing and medical facilities and the YMCA to bring this program to fruition.

Lesley has brought many new programs to our senior community. Here is just a small sample of some:

Bunny Yoga with Hoppy Hour (yoga class with bunnies from Minnesota Companion Rabbit Society and donated ice cream from Blue Bunny afterwards), Spring Tea, Super Bowl Party, Tech Talk, Monthly Movies, Foot Care, Deer in a Dishpan (described later in this nomination). She has also increased the number of trips Club Prior offers, such as Christmas in Mankato (holiday lights), Sherburne Wildlife Refuge, Daylily Tour, various shows, museums, stadium tours, etc. She is not afraid to bring our seniors anywhere. She even rents and drives a van herself for smaller trips for more one on one attention. She has expanded the offerings to evenings as well to draw in the baby boomers that have not retired yet.

She loves her job and the seniors. You can tell this by all the time she spends on her events and programs both during and after work hours. She offered a class called Deer in a Dishpan. On her own time, she contacted the DNR for a deer, that was confiscated from an illegal hunt, and hired a butcher to come into Club Prior to show people how to cut it up to get the most meat possible. The attendees loved it!

She also puts personal touches and details on all her programs and events. For instance, she makes, and crafts together, beautiful center pieces for her events with items she finds at the dollar store, she has murals painted on the windows during the holidays and she provides home-made treats to all Club Prior attendees.

She has been able to reach out and collaborate with more vendors and community organizations than we have before. Such organizations as NAMI, Scott County Library systems, YMCA, Community Education, St. Francis, Lions, Optimists and local businesses and churches have all been a part of programming, events and sponsorships at Club Prior. She has also pursued and received many donations for the facility that add to the fun, welcoming atmosphere. Items such as a wooden display board used for selling donated greeting cards, pizza oven, pool table light and refurbishing of the pool table.

Financial donations to Club Prior alone reached over \$10,000 last year. This is the most we have ever had in our department.

Club Prior has grown more in the last 3 years since Lesley has been here, then I ever thought possible.

I know that is solely because of her dedication, hard work and love for the seniors. She has changed the lives of so many seniors in our community through her friendship and support. She receives thank you cards throughout the year from seniors showing their appreciation.

I don't know of anyone more deserving of this award.

**Angie Barstad**  
**Recreation Manager**  
**City of Prior Lake**

Lesley Young has worked with the senior population for the past 15 years. This includes her time working for the cities of Prior Lake, New Brighton and Shoreview.

In Prior Lake she works three days a week (18 hours a week) and in 2019 Club Prior saw record attendance of 8,821 visits to the center. She spearheaded a very successful Club Prior 10th Anniversary Celebration in May 2018. In the spring of 2019 she collaborated with the Hugs for Hunter Foundation in a project to tie blankets for children in need. In addition she had no cancellation of any of her scheduled day trips in 2019. Other projects she has developed and ran include: Memory Café, Club Prior Party, Bunny Yoga, and the installation and donation process for new audio visual equipment at Club Prior in collaboration with Prior Lake Lions Club.

In New Brighton she stepped into a roll where the previous Senior Coordinator was well loved – hard shoes to fill! Yet in no time at all, the seniors in New Brighton fell in love with her. Some of Lesley's Senior's from Shoreview followed her to New Brighton because they dearly liked her and the programs she ran. Lesley conducted "Coffee Chats" and listened to the seniors and many became fast friends. While in New Brighton Lesley stated offering extended travel trips which was a new program. She worked with three different companies to provide tours for the seniors. This was a new revenue source for New Brighton (and a good one!). She also started a new program called the Spring Tea. She had participants that registered bring their favorite tea cup and each, of course, had a story to go along with the cup. For this event Lesley went all out with the theme in decorations and food AND the guests really decked themselves out (dressed up), hats and all! If you do not know this about Lesley, she is quite the decorator and can come up with a theme to make any event look so elegant! She partnered on a collaboration with a local church that was political charged and she managed to keep the elected officials informed and happy with the programs that were created. She offered several senior programs including: Day trips, 55+ TrivExpo, hiking club, educational workshops, Club 55 Memberships, SilverSneakers Program, and the Kitchen KutUps (a NB performing band). While in New Brighton she received an Award from AARP Drivers Safety due to the high enrollment in the programs she marketed and offered at the New Brighton Community Center.

While in Shoreview Lesley grew senior services to a new level of quality and variety of offerings. She enhanced the programs she managed including exercise classes, educational workshops, card playing groups, special events and senior dining. She also ran the Shoreview Farmers Market, which many

seniors attended regularly. She was an extremely valuable member of the Recreation team and well respected by both her co-workers and patrons.

Lesley has served MASS as secretary for two years and has just committed to another two year term. She has also attended several Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) conferences, workshops, training sessions and events.

I have known Lesley for 20 years and I have never met a person who couldn't get along with her. She is honest, fair, friendly and outgoing and committed to HER seniors (wherever she is working!). She is a team player when it comes to working with co-workers, groups, partnerships and elected officials.

Lesley is very deserving of this award!

**Sandy Breuer**  
**Parks Director Agency**  
**Washington County**