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NU Social Worker Honored for Contribution to Field of Aging and Alzheimer's Research

CHICAGO, IL— Now more than ever, social workers are being called upon to turn their compassion into action—helping communities navigate the urgent challenges of our time. From mass deportations of migrants and continued attacks on LGBTQIA2+ individuals to threats to reproductive rights and diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, social workers stand at the forefront of change. Across Illinois and the nation, they are leading the response to the mental health and substance use crisis and addressing the chronic income inequality that contributes to rising homelessness.

In alignment with the 2025 National Professional Social Work Month theme, “Social Work: Compassion + Action,” the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL) is proud to recognize two outstanding Illinois social workers whose leadership and dedication exemplify the values of the profession.

One of this year's honorees is **Darby J. Morhardt, PhD, LCSW** (she/her), recipient of the **2025 NASW-Illinois Chapter Lifetime Achievement Award**. Dr. Morhardt is professor at the Mesulam Institute for Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. There she directs the Outreach, Recruitment, and Engagement Core, Psychosocial Initiatives, and Miller Social Work Fellowship in Neurocognitive Disorders. Her research includes the experience of individuals and families living with dementia, psychosocial interventions, and community engagement to address inequities in dementia education, awareness, and research. Appointed to Illinois Alzheimer's Disease Advisory Committee, she contributes to Alzheimer's Disease State Plan and co-founded the Illinois Cognitive Resources Network. Dr. Morhardt serves on the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Elder Law to more effectively address the needs and legal issues of older adults.

In support of their nomination of Dr. Morhardt, colleagues Andy Teitelman, ACSW, and Phyllis Mitzen wrote: “We can think of no one more deserving in light of her more than 40 years of ground-breaking work in the field of aging. Her research, practice and community involvement have had tremendous impact, benefitting the individuals and families who struggle with Alzheimer's Disease and the professionals who strive to treat them.”

The NASW-Illinois Chapter celebrates Dr. Morhardt and all of this year's honorees whose leadership, compassion, and advocacy strengthen the social work profession and the communities they serve.

Dr. Morhardt is one of two statewide awardees recognized by the chapter this year. To learn more about all 2025 award recipients, visit <https://www.naswil.org/chapter-awards>, or contact NASW-IL Executive Director Joel Rubin at jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world. The NASW-Illinois Chapter is one of the association's largest chapters and advocates for over 20,000 social workers in Illinois alone. NASW strives to advance social work careers, grow social work businesses, and protect the profession while seeking to also enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy.