



Real Possibilities

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Contact: Jim Flaherty, Communications Director
Office 608/ 286-6308 – Cell 608/ 698-0928

*State Reps. Rohrkaste & Hesselbein honored by AARP
for helping Wisconsin's family caregivers*

Madison, Wisconsin – To recognize their work to support family caregivers throughout Wisconsin, AARP this week honored two State Representatives – Mike Rohrkaste (R-Neenah) and Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton) – as 2016 “Capitol Caregivers,” a bipartisan group of elected officials from more than 23 states.

Rep. Rohrkaste served as chairman of the Speakers Task Force on Alzheimer’s and Dementia, while Rep. Hesselbein served as vice chair. Both are being honored for their work on respite care and advancing legislation that significantly increased services that allow family caregivers to get some relief from their caregiving responsibilities.

“This is a wonderful example of the role the government can play in making the lives of Wisconsin caregivers easier,” said Helen Marks Dicks, State Advocacy Director for AARP Wisconsin.

“The task force came together and listened to the voices of people suffering from Alzheimer’s and dementia and their caregivers. After assessing the needs of these vulnerable citizens, they made recommendations that resulted in the expansion of programs to help provide respite for family caregivers and help for patients in crisis.

“This was a well-crafted, bipartisan effort. Alzheimer’s and dementia occurs without regard to party affiliation, and we need to respond together. AARP Wisconsin was proud to work with Representatives Rohrkaste and Hesselbein, and we applaud the outcome of their hard work,” Dicks said.

AARP Wisconsin staff and volunteers gathered at the State Capitol on Tuesday, Jan. 31, to present the awards to Reps. Rohrkaste and Hesselbein. These leaders are helping the family caregivers who make it possible for older

Wisconsinites to live independently in their homes and communities, which is where they want to be.

“AARP thanks these lawmakers for championing respite care,” said Sam Wilson, State Director of AARP Wisconsin, which serves more than 840,000 members in the Badger State. “They provided integral leadership that will help make the big responsibilities of family caregivers in Wisconsin a little bit easier.”

Nearly 600,000 Wisconsinites provide unpaid care for their older parents, spouses, and other loved ones – a contribution valued at about \$7 billion annually.

They help with bathing and dressing, meal preparation, managing finances, transportation, grocery shopping and more. Many even perform medical tasks like wound care, injections, and complex medication management.

“Family caregivers are the backbone of our Wisconsin care system,” Wilson said. “They need our support. Respite relief is a first step to providing a little bit of help for these caregivers. In 2017 and beyond, AARP will continue to fight for more support, including help at home, workplace flexibility, training, relief and more.”

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About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.