



NEWS

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WISE & Healthy Aging Honors Community Advocates at Annual 'Celebration of Caring'

"Celebration of Caring" Will Be Held Monday, June 20, at The Broad Stage

SANTA MONICA (June 1, 2022) – The life and legacy of a long-time community advocate, a veteran volunteer and the president of the RAND Corporation will be honored for the numerous contributions they have made to improve the lives of others at WISE & healthy Aging's annual "Celebration of Caring" event at The Broad Stage on June 20.

- The life and legacy of **lao Katagiri** will be commemorated for her more than 40 years of leadership, collaboration, and service on behalf of Westside residents.
- A 12-year veteran volunteer at WISE & Healthy Aging, **Barbara Browning** will be honored for the countless hours of compassionate support she has provided to older adults and their caregivers.
- President of the RAND Corporation, **Michael Rich**, will be recognized for his 40-year milestone of service on WISE & Healthy Aging's Board of Directors.

lao Katagiri – Posthumous Leadership in Caring Award

A posthumous "Leadership in Caring" award will be presented by Michael Rich to honor the life and legacy of lao Katagiri, who passed away unexpectedly on April 28 at the age of 69, after battling a rapidly progressing cancer. Originally slated to be honored in 2020 by WISE & Healthy Aging, the COVID pandemic pushed the recognition until 2022. Though ill, lao agreed to proceed with the recognition on June 20, wishing to continue her support of the mission of WISE & Healthy Aging.

"Gone from our community all too soon, lao will never be forgotten, always in our hearts and forever missed. It is our privilege to honor her at this year's Celebration of Caring event and to have the opportunity for the community to gather in celebration of her life," said Grace Cheng Braun, President and CEO of WISE & Healthy Aging. "lao's involvement on the Westside has made an indelible mark on community life."

Santa Monica College is providing The Broad Stage venue at its Performing Arts Center for the "Celebration of Caring" event.

“This event brings a spotlight to the tremendous contributions of one of the brightest lights in Santa Monica for community service, collaboration, and leadership — that was lao Katagiri,” said Kathryn Jeffrey, Superintendent and President, Santa Monica College.

Having retired in 2016 as Community Relations Director at the RAND Corporation, lao stayed just as busy if not busier in retirement, continuing to be involved with nonprofits, city officials, business and community leaders and residents to make a difference on Los Angeles’ Westside.

From infants and children to older adults, lao’s finger had been on the pulse of community life for more than 40 years. Whether it was helping to develop the state-of-the-art Santa Monica Early Childhood Lab School, a joint venture of the City and Santa Monica College, or playing a key role in the merger between the Center for Healthy Aging and WISE Senior Services to become WISE & Healthy Aging, lao always saw the possibilities and was instrumental in making them happen.

At the time of her death, lao was chair of the board of directors of Providence Saint John’s Health Center, vice chair of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce (which she had chaired 2009 to 2010), and co-chair of the Early Childhood District Advisory Committee of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. She also served on the boards of the Santa Monica College Associates and of WISE & Healthy Aging, where she was vice chair and a past chair.

Barbara Browning – Compassion in Caring Award

The “Compassion in Caring” award will be presented to Barbara Browning, a veteran volunteer who has brought her expertise as a nurse, program administrator and trainer to become an integral part of the day-to-day operations at WISE & Healthy Aging.

A past recipient of the American Red Cross “Rick Crocker Spirit of Volunteerism” Award, Barbara retired from her 45-year career at UCLA-Santa Monica Medical Center in August 2010, and little more than a month later began volunteering at WISE & Healthy Aging. In the beginning, Barbara helped roll out a new program that would connect neighbors with older adults who needed help with tasks to remain living at home.

Shortly thereafter, Barbara began supporting a number of programs at WISE & Healthy Aging. Today, Barbara not only volunteers in WISE’s Adult Day Service Center, where she can be found doing everything from checking in clients to supporting learning, recreational and fitness activities that take place throughout the day. Barbara also trains both professional and family caregivers as part of WISE’s evidence-based caregiver training and leads support groups for family caregivers.

Her contributions also extend to teaching a variety of nationally recognized evidence-based classes – for active seniors and for those with mild memory loss. And, when the world went virtual during the pandemic, Barbara became a backup teacher for instructors who couldn’t teach because of COVID, helping to keep clients connected and less isolated.

“Because I’m older myself, I think it helps clients relate to me,” Barbara says. “Building caring relationships is my favorite part of what I do. It’s not only the person with Alzheimer’s or dementia that needs to be cared for and supported, but it’s the people who take care of them every day. I try to help them know they are not alone and not to feel guilty about what’s happening with their loved one.”

Michael Rich – Board Service Recognition

For 47 years, Michael Rich has furthered the mission of the RAND Corporation as a leader in providing expertise, analysis and evidence-based ideas – with the last decade as RAND’s president and CEO. For the last 40 of these years, Michael has served on the WISE Senior Services (now WISE & Healthy Aging) Board of Directors. This year, we celebrate this special milestone of board service with much gratitude in recognition of his leadership and governance.

Michael is renowned for carving a deep footprint in both local and domestic public policy through leadership and dedication to rigorous research and analysis over his exemplary career at RAND – one of the most trusted sources for policymaking in the nation.

“This same leadership and dedication has been invaluable to WISE & Healthy Aging,” said Cheng Braun. “Michael’s approach to finding solutions through in-depth analysis and fact-finding has also helped guide decision-making at WISE & Healthy Aging and we are grateful for his insights and guidance over these past 40 years.”

Celebration of Caring will be on Monday, June 20, at The Broad Stage, with proceeds supporting services and programs offered by WISE & Healthy Aging. More information about the event can be found at www.wiseandhealthyaging.org.

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About WISE & Healthy Aging

WISE & Healthy Aging is a multiservice, community-based nonprofit organization serving older adults and their families and caregivers throughout Los Angeles County. Headquartered in Santa Monica, the team at WISE & Healthy Aging works to advance the dignity and quality of life of older adults through leadership, advocacy, and high-quality, innovative services.