



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Interview: Brynne McBride (608) 261-6939 ext. 210 or (608) 279-2426 (cell)

HealthWatch WI Announces Annual Award Recipients

Madison, WI - HealthWatch Wisconsin is pleased to announce its awardees for categories that include: a combined outstanding health care outreach/leadership award; a new lifetime achievement in health care coverage advocacy; and an award for media excellence in Wisconsin. The awards ceremony is part of the 9th Annual HealthWatch Wisconsin Conference titled, “3 Steps to Health Care Coverage” convening Wednesday April 6 in Madison at the Madison Masonic Center.

“The awards recognize exceptional ‘ground level’ advocacy, outreach, and investigative work by our awardees that directly impacts people seeking health care and coverage in Wisconsin,” says Brynne McBride, Chief Operating Officer of ABC for Health and Project Director of its HealthWatch Wisconsin Project. “This year is special for a number of reasons,” continues McBride.

For the first time, HealthWatch Wisconsin combined its Outstanding Outreach Effort and Outstanding Elected Official Awards. The Leadership Council recognizes **Milwaukee** – both Milwaukee County under County Executive Chris Abele’s leadership **and** the City of Milwaukee under the leadership of Mayor Tom Barrett. “The unique outreach and leadership experiences of 2015 in the Milwaukee region required a joining of the two award categories this year,” says McBride.

McBride continues, “We are delighted to present County Executive Abele and Mayor Barrett with this award on behalf of their community’s outstanding performance connecting many individuals and families to health care and coverage which resulted in a first place finish in the ‘Healthy Communities Challenge.’ Our award recognizes the many staff, advocates and volunteers across Milwaukee area communities who worked under Abele and Barrett’s leadership to make a profound and historic statement on the importance of connecting un- and underinsured individuals to health care coverage.”

County Executive Chris Abele upon learning of this award replied, “I’m honored that Milwaukee County is being recognized again for our team’s work forging a broad coalition of healthcare partners to help people in our community get the coverage they need to live stronger, fuller, healthier lives. But the real win is that 90,000 more people in Wisconsin have access to comprehensive healthcare. The Affordable Care Act is working, and the Milwaukee area is getting healthier every day.”

Mayor Tom Barrett replied, “I am honored to receive this award from HealthWatch Wisconsin and proudly accept on behalf of Milwaukee’s communitywide work to help area residents gain and maintain health care coverage. At the heart of both this year’s White House Healthy Communities Challenge and City of Milwaukee’s daily work to assist families accessing coverage is a goal to build a healthier Milwaukee. Helping area residents access quality and affordable health care coverage is a key step to improving the health of individuals, families and our entire community.”

Celebrating Lifetime Achievements in Health Care and Coverage Advocacy:

This year, HealthWatch Wisconsin recognizes a lifetime achievement award for a recipient working as a genuine champion for improving the lives of Wisconsin residents struggling with poverty and access to all forms of health care and coverage. McBride says, “While HealthWatch Wisconsin annually recognizes an individual for outstanding advocacy in health care and coverage, this year





is special. The advocacy community lost a dear friend and leader this past summer, with the unexpected passing of Amy Mendel-Clemens. Most recently, Amy led the Capital Income Maintenance Consortium, but began her career over 30 years ago as an advocate and later a policy guru for low-income and underserved families. With the blessing of Amy's family and colleagues, our HealthWatch Wisconsin 'Advocate of the Year' will occasionally recognize lifetime achievement for certain nominees.

HealthWatch Wisconsin will recognize these special nominations as our **Amy Mendel-Clemens Lifetime Achievement Award.**"

This award recognizes lifetime achievement as a genuine champion for improving the lives of Wisconsin residents struggling with poverty and access to all forms of health care and coverage. HealthWatch Wisconsin will present this award to Ken Germanson as the **inaugural winner** of this Lifetime Achievement Award for his long and continued commitment to health care and coverage advocacy in Milwaukee and Wisconsin. "Ken is a fixture in Milwaukee," says McBride. "He's an advocate for access to health care, workers' rights, civic engagement, and education. From his roots as a reporter, through his active career in community agencies and labor unions, Ken is humble, kind and generous." Ken was an early leader in the Milwaukee HealthWatch Coalition, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

McBride continues, "Amy Mendel-Clemens was an inspirational, engaging, and committed leader in policy and program development and implementation. She did all things with grace, style, and passion and was beloved and highly regarded by her family, friends, colleagues, and everyone she met along the way. We truly believe she would be thrilled to know Ken was the first recipient of her namesake award."

Celebrating Media Excellence:

HealthWatch Wisconsin selected Bill Lueders as the recipient for the "2015 Media Effort of the Year" award. Bill's piece titled, "Wisconsin FoodShare Fraud Crackdown Questioned," written when he was at the Center for Investigative Journalism in May 2015, represented the type of investigative journalism worthy of this award. In particular, the Leadership Council acknowledged and praised the article's unique and well researched exploration of FoodShare fraud allegations that raised important questions about the legitimacy and value of crackdown efforts upon low income populations.

If You Go:

What: HealthWatch will present our Annual Awards at a special reception that coincides with the 9th Annual HealthWatch Wisconsin Conference.

Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 5pm-7pm

Place: Madison Masonic Center, 301 Wisconsin Ave, Madison, WI, main Ballroom

RSVP: A RSVP is appreciated: email info@safetyweb.org or call 608-261-6939 ext. 218. There is no cost to attend the awards reception. Registration is required to attend the full HealthWatch conference.

HealthWatch Wisconsin is a project of ABC for Health, Inc., a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm dedicated to linking children and families, particularly those with special health care needs, to health care benefits and services. ABC for Health's mission is to provide information, advocacy tools, legal services, and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services. The HealthWatch Wisconsin project is an extension of these efforts, and gathers public health professionals to learn about access to health care and coverage issues and amplify the voices of low income or underserved individuals in Wisconsin. HealthWatch Wisconsin also takes an opportunity each year to recognize individuals doing outstanding work in the community.



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