

Contact: Beth Scott
Phone: 562-690-4001, x215
Email: bscott@iha4health.org
iha4health.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Michael Villaire named 2015 winner
of prestigious Cecilia and Leonard Doak Health Literacy Champion Award**

La Habra, CA – 8/24/2015 – *Villaire will receive award at the annual October awards dinner to be held in St. Louis.*

Michael Villaire, the CEO of a nationally renowned nonprofit dedicated to advancing health literacy and providing community health services, will be awarded the 2015 Cecilia and Leonard Doak Health Literacy Champion Award, Health Literacy Missouri (HLM) announced today.

Villaire, who holds a master's degree in organizational leadership and management from the University of La Verne in California, heads up the Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) in La Habra, California.

IHA is a not-for-profit public benefit charity that works to empower people to better health through innovative health literacy solutions. Its easy-to-read self-help health books have been used by state governments, community groups and hospitals across the U.S. IHA produces the longest-running annual continuing education conference for healthcare professionals, focusing on programs and solutions to improve health literacy.

Villaire, who joined IHA in 2000, directs the organization's mission and vision, and coordinates all health literacy activities. He plans and produces IHA's annual continuing education health literacy conference.

"Michael Villaire's work in both administration and communications has significantly advanced the cause of health literacy," said Dr. Steve Pu, HLM board president and a surgeon in private practice in Kennett, Mo. "We are proud to honor his extraordinary contributions to the field."

IHA provides consultation, training, and review and revision of health information services to health plans and health care systems throughout the country. It also runs the La Habra Family Resource Center, which works to support strong families by connecting them with community resources that can address the health, emotional, social, and academic needs of children and their families in La Habra, California.

Villaire joined IHA in 2000 as director of programs and operations and assumed the post of chief operating officer in 2010 before taking the helm of the organization in 2013. Previously, Villaire served as managing editor for a number of peer-reviewed medical and nursing journals and produced national healthcare symposia. Villaire, who earned baccalaureate degrees in English and Communications from Western Michigan University, received numerous awards throughout his journalism career.

In addition to providing leadership for IHA, Villaire sits on the Board of Directors of the Center for Plain Language and is a member of the Institute of Medicine Health Literacy Roundtable of the National Academy of Sciences. Villaire is an adjunct professor at Brandman University, where he teaches a core course in health literacy in the Masters in Health Risk and Crisis Communications program.

Villaire has published articles in a variety of peer-reviewed journals and has coauthored two books: *What to Do When Your Child is Heavy* (2010) and *Health Literacy in Primary Care: A Clinician's Guide* (2007).

HLM will present the award at the 6th Annual Health Literacy Tribute Awards Dinner on Oct. 15th at The Double Tree by Hilton Hotel—Westport in St. Louis. The following day, Oct. 16th, Health Literacy Missouri will host a daylong summit at the same venue in observance of Health Literacy Month.

Health Literacy Missouri established the **Cecilia and Leonard Doak Health Literacy Champion Award** to honor individuals and organizations who make outstanding contributions in health literacy and whose work focuses on bridging the gap between the skills of people and the demands of the health care system.

The award, named after the founders of the health literacy movement, is presented to a single individual or organization each year and recognizes those who exhibit the highest standards of excellence, dedication and accomplishment over a sustained period of time, and who are creative and highly skilled pioneers in the health literacy field. The award recognizes rigorous work and celebrates collaborative efforts to shape a path to good health.

Previous winners include: **Dr. Andrew Pleasant**, senior director for health literacy and research at Canyon Ranch Institute, a non-profit public charity; **Dr. Cynthia Baur**, a senior advisor for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the lead editor of the National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy; **Dr. Ruth Murphey Parker**, who has worked with health services researchers in medicine, public health and social sciences to advance the understanding of health literacy; **Dr. James Kimmey**, past president of the Missouri Foundation for Health and a key founder of Health Literacy Missouri; and **Dr. Rima Rudd**, one of the world's leading researchers in health literacy and a Senior Lecturer on Society, Human Development and Health at the Harvard School of Public Health.

The Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) is a nonprofit, 501 (c)(3) healthcare public charity, with the mission of empowering people to better health. IHA accomplishes its mission by hosting a national Annual Health Literacy Conference for healthcare professionals; publishing the easy to read, easy to use What To Do For Health book series; and providing health literacy communication solutions consulting services. Locally, IHA administers the La Habra Family Resource Center, and is a leader of Covered OC, a collaborative of agencies advocating for and enrolling consumers in healthcare coverage in Orange County, California. For more information about IHA's products and services, please visit www.ih4health.org.

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