Lisa O’Neill Named ‘2015 Gerontologist of the Year’ by Arizona Geriatrics Society

The director of education for the University of Arizona Center on Aging is recognized for multiple efforts to enhance the quality of life and care for the unique needs of those of advancing age across the state of Arizona.

Contact: David Mogollón, (520) 626-1137 Nov. 2, 2015

TUCSON, Ariz. – The University of Arizona Center on Aging is proud to announce that the Arizona Geriatrics Society “2015 Gerontologist of the Year” Award has been awarded to Lisa O’Neill, MPH.

Each year, the Arizona Geriatrics Society recognizes and honors exemplary and outstanding health care professionals who are passionate about caring for older adults and have made significant contributions in the field of gerontology. The Gerontologist of the Year Award is open to all Arizona health care professionals including nurses, social workers, case managers, therapists, psychologists and related professions. The award was presented at the society’s annual fall symposium on Oct. 31, 2015, in Phoenix.

“I am very honored to have won this award. I am proud to be part of the distinguished ranks of Arizona Geriatrics Society award recipients and grateful for the constant support and encouragement I have received from Drs. Jane Mohler, Mindy Fain and Janko Nikolich at the Arizona Center on Aging,” O’Neill said.

As education director at the UA Center on Aging, O’Neill is instrumental in the successful education and training of health professionals, caregivers and patients across Arizona, helping to build a well prepared workforce capable of caring for Arizona’s elders. She is a leader in helping to build aging-related, high-value models of care and addressing aging-related policies across Arizona and beyond.

As an appointed member of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging, she is highly respected for her work ethic and productivity. She participated in the newly released “Arizona Alzheimer’s State Plan: A Framework for Action” (released in September), as a member of the Arizona Alzheimer’s Task Force. As co-founder and chair of the Southern Arizona Hoarding Task Force, she is one of Arizona’s state experts on Hoarding Disorder, and leads a Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Hoarding course and support group in partnership with the Pima Council on Aging. In addition, through a U.S. Health and Human Services Administration on Aging grant, she is working with the Tohono O’odham Nation to help build the policies and practices to implement elder abuse screening.

O’Neill also is the UA Center on Aging’s project manager for a $2.5 million, three-year Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) grant announced at the White House in July to better
prepare health care workers to respond to needs associated with advancing age. The center was one of 44 organizations in 29 states — and the only one in Arizona — to receive a GWEP grant.

O’Neill holds a bachelor’s degree in business management from the University of Phoenix, a master’s degree in public health (MPH) with a concentration in health policy and management, and is completing her doctorate of behavioral health at Arizona State University. She is also an Aging and Cognition Scholar of the UA Prevention Research Center, which is affiliated with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention’s Healthy Brain Research Network.

For further information, visit www.geriatrics.medicine.arizona.edu or email lvitkus@aging.arizona.edu.

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About the University of Arizona Center on Aging
The University of Arizona Center on Aging, an Arizona Board of Regents Center of Excellence at the University of Arizona Health Sciences, works closely with the UA Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Public Health — as well as the College of Nursing & Health Innovation at Arizona State University and other statewide partners — to promote an interdisciplinary approach to its mission of enabling older adults to live healthy and functional lives through comprehensive programs in research, education and training and clinical care. It is affiliated with the Division of Geriatrics, General Internal Medicine and Palliative Medicine within the UA Department of Medicine. Students, residents and fellows also get clinical training primarily at Banner – University Medical Center and Banner – University Medical Group facilities in Tucson and Phoenix through their affiliation as the teaching hospitals and clinics for the University of Arizona. Both are part of Banner – University Medicine, the academic medicine division of Phoenix-based Banner Health, one of the largest nonprofit health care systems in the country with operations in seven states. The Tucson hospital rated 39th of 5,000 hospitals surveyed for geriatric care in the most recent U.S. News & World Report “Best Hospital” rankings.

About the University of Arizona Health Sciences
The University of Arizona Health Sciences is the statewide leader in biomedical research and health professions training. The UA Health Sciences includes the UA Colleges of Medicine (Phoenix and Tucson), Nursing, Pharmacy, and the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, with main campus locations in Tucson and the growing Phoenix Biomedical Campus in downtown Phoenix. From these vantage points, the UA Health Sciences reaches across the state of Arizona and the greater Southwest to provide cutting-edge health education, research, patient care and community outreach services. A major economic engine, the UA Health Sciences employs almost 5,000 people, has nearly 1,000 faculty members and garners more than $126 million in research grants and contracts annually. For more information, see: http://ahsc.arizona.edu

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