

Formerly NJ Foundation for Aging

Contact: **Cathy Rowe, DrPH**  
Executive Director

**Elizabeth Davis, Founder and Executive Director of The Bright Side Family,  
Presented with NJAAW's 2022 Carl F. West Award for Everyday Excellence**



**The Bright Side Family founder and Executive Director Elizabeth Davis (center) receives NJAAW's Carl F. West Award for Everyday Excellence from retired Board Chair and member Mark Tabakman. NJAAW's Executive Director Cathy Rowe, DrPH, looks on.**

**Trenton, NJ (June, 2022)** – Teaneck resident Elizabeth Davis, LCSW, CALA, founder and Executive Director of The Bright Side Family (pictured, center), received the 2022 Carl F. West Award for Everyday Excellence from New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW) at its 24th annual conference. The Bright Side Family is a closely affiliated group of non-profit organizations that have been developed in response to the evolving needs of older adults in Teaneck and Bergen County, NJ.

Retired NJAAW Board Chair and member Mark Tabakman (left), who served with Carl West – and also on the award selection committee – presented the crystal award to Davis before an audience of more than 220 aging services professionals and advocates.

NJAAW's Executive Director Cathy Rowe, DrPH (right), said, "I have known Elizabeth for several years as part of the age-friendly communities movement. Every time I meet her, I learn more about her involvement and dedication to helping NJ's older adults. She is a humble leader and truly worthy of this award."

### **About Carl F. West**

A dedicated advocate for older adults, Carl F. West (1939-2018) was the longest-serving Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Executive Director (Mercer County) in the nation. He also held several leadership positions within the NJ Association of Area Agency on Aging (NJ4A). Nationally, he served as an advocate on the Board of the National AAAA (N4A) as well as the National Caucus & Center on Black Aging (NCBA).

West sought to expand the local policy discussions beyond the key, but limited, national funding streams. As such, he joined three other AAA Executive Directors as co-founders of the NJ Foundation for Aging (NJFA) to focus on the basic needs of New Jersey's economically vulnerable older adults, their families and their caregivers. West served as first president of NJFA (now NJAAW).

To honor West, NJAAW sought nominations of individuals and organization that embody his drive and passion, make a difference in the lives of older adults in New Jersey and exhibit everyday excellence. A committee comprising former and present NJAAW Board members, along with West's daughter, reviewed the nominations from around the state, and selected Davis.

Nominator Dr. Claire Scarano, a Board member and volunteer for The Bright Side Family, wrote, "Elizabeth's valiant work started with her rescue three decades ago of a personal care home on the verge of closure – Bright Side Manor in Teaneck, which today is the only truly affordable assisted-living facility in Bergen County. Elizabeth is a problem-solver with the determination to develop programs that fill needs unmet by other providers. She has persuaded county government and major philanthropies to support many innovative ventures."

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In a letter of support for Davis' nomination, former Teaneck Township Mayor and Council Member Jacqueline Kates noted, "Elizabeth is a true visionary, a problem-solver with a strong commitment to social justice and a protector of those in need of a voice as well as access to a place to call home; a friend to so many. Her modesty and reserved manner bely her steely determination and persistence."

Julia Stoumbos, Aging in Place Program Director for The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation, wrote, "[Elizabeth's] entrepreneurial spirit, persistence, and ultimately, her effectiveness in the face of severe challenges resulted in the development of two affordable senior housing facilities, and a third is in progress – an extraordinary achievement for a single human being! Because of her gentle, aware, humble and person-focused approach to leadership, she has not only improved the lives of countless older people and their families, but made them feel heard, valued, cared for, and safe."

### Remarks from Elizabeth Davis

In accepting the award, Davis said, "I am honored to receive this wonderful award, and to be placed in the company of Carl F. West, who, from all accounts, was a passionate and tireless advocate for making New Jersey a better place to grow old.

"...As our non-profit has expanded its role to offer an array of housing and supportive services, I was fortunate to become part of a circle of local providers all advocating for ways to make our social services and long-term-care systems work better for all older adults.

"For our advocacy to have grown into a regional age-friendly movement, in partnership with statewide organizations like New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well, fills me with hope and strengthens my resolve to keep advocating. During these past five to six years, in particular, I am struck by the strides we have all made...

"I want to thank New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well for being an important advocacy leader and for its work to educate the populace about programs, policy solutions and the work of provider organizations like mine. And I must say, your organization's recent name change is right on target. We're all here representing different organizations but our common goal is to create a state where we can all "Age Well." And to get there – we all need to follow Carl F. West's example and embrace our role as advocates – **plural**. None of us will ever again be **lonely** voices for change."

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### About The Bright Side Family

*The [Bright Side Family](#) is a closely affiliated group of non-profit organizations that have been developed in response to the evolving needs of older adults in Teaneck and Bergen County, NJ. The organization's mission is to provide affordable housing and support services that respond to the changing needs and preferences of older adults, offer choice, promote dignity and ensure safety and comfort. Its facilities and programs include Bright Side Manor, an affordable assisted living community; The Brookdale, a 62-unit subsidized senior apartment building; PALS, Bergen County's only licensed assisted living program; Age Friendly Teaneck, a community-wide initiative; Senior Checks, a free county wide money management program for older adults, and Secure Futures for Senior Women, a program that promotes financial literacy among older women and equips them with tools to overcome the unique financial challenges women face as they age. Age Friendly Teaneck's advocacy and community organizing work has contributed to building awareness of the need for more affordable housing and support services for seniors. In response, the Township has designated The Bright Side Family and its partner, The Alpert Group, as the developer of 40 units of housing on Township-owned property and committed funds from its affordable housing trust fund to support the project. The new building will include community space on the ground floor that will house health, wellness and social support programs for Teaneck residents.*

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### **About NJAAW**

*NJ Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW, [njaaw.org](http://njaaw.org)), formerly NJ Foundation for Aging, has been on the forefront of revolutionizing the aging experience since 1998. It is the only statewide nonprofit focused solely on providing leadership in public policy and education to enable older adults to live with independence and dignity in their communities. NJAAW's social action issues include senior housing and hunger, elder economic security, older workers and transportation. The award-winning *Aging Insights*, a monthly topical TV program produced by NJAAW, connects caregivers, aging adults and their families to community-based services and resources. The show is available on NJAAW's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/c/njadvocatesforagingwell](https://youtube.com/c/njadvocatesforagingwell), at [njaaw.org](http://njaaw.org) and more than 70 public-access stations across NJ (check local listings for channels and times). NJAAW also presents educational forums and an Annual Conference offering development opportunities and best practices for professionals entrusted with caring for older adults.*