

## **Eileen Rasmussen 2011 Graduate of the Year**

Today, Eileen Rasmussen's role is to assist hundreds of individuals each day. As Director of Resident Services at Sunflower Gardens, an Alzheimer's Residential Facility in Santa Ana, she works with the caregivers, nurses and families of the facility's residents. She is responsible for ensuring that the 72 residents are receiving the best of care and their family members are assured their loved ones are well cared for by staff.

Eileen is also working to advance in her career. Later this month she will begin her studies to be License Vocational Nurse (LVN). She said having her LVN would qualify her to move up as the Wellness Director within the company.

While her situation now is the result of her commitment to build a new life, her world three years ago fell apart due to an unexpected series of events. "Three years ago I was homeless, without a car and out of work. I went to live at a women's Catholic shelter in Santa Ana in November 2008," said Eileen. "I took a good look around me and decided that I was not going to live this way. My goal was to be out of there in one year's time."

During the next year, she bought a car, found more permanent housing and was employed as a caregiver. She was still walking that poverty line but proud of what she had accomplished. She was ready for her next goal. "I was constantly struggling to make ends meet. I had looked into CNA programs in the area, but they were too expensive for me. Then at work one day, one of my co-workers told me about the Goodwill Healthcare Training Program," she said. She graduated from the Goodwill Healthcare Training Program on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 and said the background and certificate from CNA program was instrumental in her landing her current position.

Speaking of her experience since 2008, she said, "This has been a humbling experience but I also needed to set an example (for her young adult children). I couldn't have accomplished my goals without the assistance of Goodwill SOLAC and local charity groups. I also learned much about myself, and I know that if anything else happens in my life, I can handle it."

Eileen said she still needs some assistance from local charities, but is motivated and has real hope for a new and better life. She added that she is also focused on giving back to the organizations and community groups as a thank-you for their help.