

**Mikkelin Kotikaari ry is recognised for fulfilling international quality criteria as it offers assisted living to the elderly and rental flats to seniors.**

Working in the South-Savonia region, Mikkelin Kotikaari ry offers enhanced assisted living and rental flats for seniors. The association is the first operator in this field to have received a five-star European quality stamp, the **'EFQM Recognised for Excellence' certificate**. The 'Recognised for Excellence' assessment is an external, 360-degrees expert assessment of the organisation's functioning and results, based on the EFQM model (European quality criteria). The EFQM Excellence model is used by tens of thousands of private- and public-sector organisations around the world as an assessment and development tool for their own operations.

Most importantly, the received certificate is a testimony of exclusive, customer-centric fulfillment in assisted living for the elderly, in which individuals are being valued. With the five-star certificate, Mikkelin Kotikaari ry is also a candidate for a Finnish quality award. This national recognition of excellence is awarded yearly to the best-rated organisations. The acknowledgment will be granted in October 2019.

The assessment was carried out by a work group formed by **Laatukeskus** Excellence Finland between January and April 2019 and the results came in at the beginning of May. Mikkelin Kotikaari ry's high rating communicates that its functioning and outcomes are, on average, at a very good level. The rating level of more than 500 points is not achieved without good leadership appreciating the association's personnel and the systematic development of the organisation's way of working over a prolonged period of time. The level of Finnish excellence award winners has generally been between 500 and 650 points. The level of winners of the EFQM Global Excellence Awards has been between 700 and 800 points.

Some companies' unethical ways of working in connection with elderly services have received repeated media attention lately. Mikkelin Kotikaari ry has stayed away from this discussion. The association communicates that it invests in quality and that it works according to responsible values. The summary of feedback received by Mikkelin Kotikaari ry has put a positive light on some very important matters concerning supported living for the elderly: Mikkelin Kotikaari ry has a good reputation among customers and their loved ones, cooperation partners as well as its own personnel - matters that are being publicly questioned these days. Its service concepts work well, the utilization of its service homes is high, and work is carried out in a customer-centric manner, based on the association's values. Its mission, *'Mission: Dignified Life'*, is realised in practice and its personnel does their daily work with commitment to the association's values and mission. The mission's ethical foundation can also be seen in the findings of the assessment material, throughout the wording of the leadership, personnel and stakeholder groups regarding its daily practices.

**Leadership** is one of the EFQM certificate's assessment areas. Excellent, five-star organisations are defined as having leaders who shape the future and get the necessary development and changes done. They are examples of compliance with the organisation's values and ethical principles, and through their actions they create trust in the future. Mikkelin Kotikaari ry's leadership is exemplary as a role model and in communicating the association's values. The leadership also supports the planning and development of the work as well as idea generation for new ways of working.

To Kotikaari ry's Managing Director, Mrs. Riitta Paasivuori, leadership is a value matter: "Nowadays, leadership is foremost about living and doing things together, and having common experiences between customers and staff, without forgetting partners and stakeholders. It is good for everyone in working communities and organisations to remember whom they are there for. In Kotikaari, leadership that supports a sense of community means that at work, there is a values-based significance for everyone. The power of example that leaders have should not be underestimated. It is a joy to note that, in this respect, we have succeeded quite nicely. Delegation, giving staff responsibility and creating the freedom to act are the starting point in striving for quality. Our work culture is such that the leadership and leaders are easy to approach. Trust and respect are two-way streets and so we advocate an **open culture of experimentation**. Our values and operational culture shape our conduct and our value base is strongly present in our care work."

Mikkelin Kotikaari ry also makes use of modern technology in its daily work. The association is a front runner in digitalised services, even when measured with an international yardstick. Bringing technology into daily routines makes the personnel's tasks easier and saves time.

The quality stamp has great significance for Mikkelin Kotikaari ry:

"We have received a recognition of quality and, at the same time, the certificate demonstrates the success of our choices. In my opinion, investing in quality is the only right way in delivering services to elderly people and we have strongly believed in that. Achieving quality doesn't happen overnight; it requires long-term and dedicated work. It has been disappointing to observe that, with regard to services for the elderly, factors very different from quality have been prevalent. Talk about quality has largely consisted of empty words.

Our society's weakest, the elderly, have been turned into merchandise. It is high time to change direction. Ready models for quality are already widely in use, as are the criteria for good nursing and nurturing. We have taken advantage of nationally and internationally widely used and tested models and best practices. They do result in quality. If they don't, then something else is wrong. Generally, the biggest reason for a lack of quality is a **failure of the organisation's overall service system**" says Riitta Paasivuori.

Riitta Paasivuori frequently reaches out to report on the situation in her field at ministerial events, to the Finnish Association for the Welfare of Older People (Vanhustyön keskusliitto), and the Finnish National Agency for Education. It is important to Riitta and the association to have a say in matters affecting our society. Based on the assessment material's development feedback, Mikkelin Kotikaari ry has already made a plan for corporate social responsibility communications and for communicating its operating models. The Board of the association approves the development plan.

For her consistent work to promote Finnish quality and competitiveness, Riitta received the **silver medal from the Board of the Finnish Quality Association** in 2014 and a **Special Recognition for excellent work** granted by Savonia University of Applied Sciences in 2009.

### **Mikkelin Kotikaari ry**

Mikkelin Kotikaari ry is a not-for-profit association with the objective to realise the highest possible quality of service at market prices. Operating in Finland's South-Savonia region, the

association's facilities include service homes Pappilanpuisto in Mikkeli and Mäntypuisto in Mäntyharju, as well as barrier-free apartment houses Veteraanipuisto, Laurinpuisto and Jalavapuisto (part-owned) in Mikkeli. The association was founded in 1984. Its mission is 'Mission: Dignified Life'.

With Riitta Paasivuori as Managing Director, the association employs approximately forty people. The association's vision for 2025 is to be the leading provincial provider of customer-centric services.

### Contact information

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An information session will be held on Wednesday, 15 May 2019, at 13:30 hrs. at the premises of Mikkelin Kotikaari ry, Kappalaisenkatu 8, 50170 Mikkeli. To attend the session, please register by email to Mikkelin Kotikaari ry's marketing partner, Mrs. Satu Törönen, by May 14 via satu.toronen@satumo.fi, or by phone: +358 400 645 805.

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