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Advocates Recognized for their Outstanding Service to Older Adults

*Hundreds gathered at the 2008 Governor's Conference on Aging
to address the needs of seniors*

CHICAGO — The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) recently hosted the 2008 Governor's Conference on Aging to promote the latest research, trends and developments in supportive technology to better serve the aging network. The theme of the conference, "Aging Smart" reflects the complex new world of aging, where service providers are challenged with new discoveries, programs and service options. During the conference, individuals from around the state, who have shown outstanding dedication and compassion about aging issues, were honored during a special awards luncheon.

"We have much to be proud of, particularly in these difficult economic times when it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges ahead. But, we in the aging profession need to be sure we are providing the best services to assist older people who face growing challenges," said IDoA Director Charles D. Johnson. "This annual conference provides a wonderful opportunity to remind ourselves that by working together we can improve the quality of life for the older adults we serve."

This year's Governor's Conference on Aging, held December 10 - 12 at the Chicago Marriott Downtown, brought together more than 700 people from across the state to focus on issues that affect a growing, aging population.

During the special awards luncheon, several awards were presented by professional associations to individuals and organizations in the Aging Network whose contributions and accomplishments merit recognition.

IDoA Director Charles D. Johnson presented the *Governor's Award for Excellence* to **Margaret Niederer**, of ICARE, the long term care ombudsman agency in Springfield. Neiderer supposedly retired after a long career as a teacher, but she decided that her cause would be fighting on behalf of all people in long term care. As an advocate to protect the rights and safety of residents in long term care, she works for the benefit of the populations living in the system.

A list of presenters and awardees follows:

The Guild of the Blind presented the *William F. Lynch Service Award* to **Melinda Dunlap**. As a Senior Counselor with the Veterans Administration Visual Impairment Center to Optimize Remaining Sight (VICTORS), Dunlap works with veterans to provide them both physical and emotional rehabilitation. She

is said to see her job as a 'calling' rather than just a job. She keeps in touch with "her vets" long after her official work is done.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) presented the *Senior Leadership Award* to State President **Evelyn Gooden**. Gooden, who was a volunteer with AARP in Chicago for more than ten years, served as President and current member of the Executive Council. She was the State Coordinator for Economic Security, and, along with staff, was responsible for public benefits outreach programs. She also served as a Volunteer Recruiter and Inter-agency Liaison working with Area Agencies on Aging.

The Illinois Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors named **Carla Gosney** for the *Excellence in Leadership Award*. Gosney, Director of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in Adams County. Gosney has been the only RSVP director since it started in Quincy. For more than 30 years, she's guided expansion and teaming up with John Wood Community College.

Carolyn Green was the recipient of the *Joyce Still Award*, given by the Illinois Association of Nutrition Providers. Green directs Lifescape Community Services Community Kitchen in Rockford. Since becoming CEO, she has completed a \$2.25 million capital campaign to expand and renovate the physical facilities, merged another agency under Lifescape, tripled the annual operating budget, and opened a third adult day service.

The Illinois Council of Case Coordination Units awarded **Nancy Lindgren** as the new *Case Manager of the Year*. Lindgren is with Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) of the Rockford Area. She has been with the VNA since 1999 and has made an exceptional contribution. She does what it takes to advocate for her clients and get them the benefits they wouldn't otherwise get, including hounding the Dept of Human Services office until they process her Medicaid applications.

Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging presented the *Sid Granet Aging Network Achievement Award for Individual Excellence* to **Michael O'Donnell**, Executive Director, of the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging. O'Donnell has been with the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging since 1979, responding to the needs of older persons and their families in a sixteen-county planning and service area. He is recognized for his leadership, commitment and professionalism.

The Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly (CLESE) presented the *Pillar of Service Award* to **Kompha Seth** of Chicago. He fought the communist regime while living in Thailand and Cambodia. After coming to the United States, Seth helped to form the Cambodian Association of Illinois where he serves as Executive Director to offer social services to Cambodians. He also co-founded other organizations to help Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian and Lao communities.

The Association of Illinois Senior Centers presented the following awards:

- The *Marketing Award* to Maine Township and **Mary Swanson**, who is President of the Association of Illinois Senior Centers. Swanson and the Maine Township MaineStreamers reach out to 5,000 + seniors to inform them of the senior center's community programs. For example, when a flood in Maine Township destroyed food in its food pantry, MainStreamers quickly responded to the request for donations.
- *The Senior Center Director of the Year* to **Karen Hansen**. Hansen, who directs the Arlington Heights Senior Center, has worked in the community for more than 20 years. She helped develop the new senior center building ten years ago. The building now houses anything an older adult might need out of a senior center, from a library to a lending closet.
- *The Senior Center Program of the Year* to the **Arlington Heights Senior Center**.
- *The Senior Center Website and Newsletter Awards* to the **Senior Services of Central Illinois**

The Illinois Adult Day Service Association presented the following awards:

- *The Everything Under the Sun Award* to the **Circle of Friends Adult Day Center and Intergenerational Volunteer Program**. The center has a partnership with the community to provide opportunities such as socialization, assistance with daily living activities and medical monitoring. The center welcomes children and people of all ages to engage at the day center.
- *The Sunlight Award* to **Kathy Van Velsor**, Director of Gordon Behrents Senior Adult Day Center in Galesburg. Van Velsor is a manager, caregiver, counselor, confidant, advocate, and mentor. She is well respected in the community, constantly looking for ways to improve service. Clients have said the program is the best thing in Galesburg and they are happiest when at the center.

The Illinois Association of Community Care Program Homecare Providers presented the following awards:

- *The Supervisor of the Year* to both **Adela Donaldson of Casa Central in Chicago**, and **Nancy Rawson of InTouch Homecare in Canton**.

Donaldson, a supervisor for ten years, started out as a homecare aide and proved to be a very organized individual who accepted assignments without hesitation, regardless of the client's location or the tasks on the plan of care. She now supervises 50 homecare aides.

Rawson has been a supervisor for ten years. She personally knows each and every client and talks to them on the phone or visits when any issue arises. Since each client is special to her, Rawson is not satisfied until the client is satisfied.

- *The D. Jeanne Tippett Scholarship* to **Mery Santana** from Casa Central in Chicago. Santana is studying cosmetology at the Cannella School of Hair Design. She has distinguished herself with dedication, hard work and the ability to listen to and please clients. Santana plans on using her Cosmetology Certificate to bring salon services into the homes of clients.

The Illinois HomeCare Council gave the *Helen Heyrman Leadership Award* to **Linda Leone**, President of the Prairieland Home Care and Praireland Private Duty, Spring Valley, and Illinois Home Care Council President. (Loene was not at the awards program, but was scheduled to receive her award soon after the program.)

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