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Illinois Department on Aging Recognizes Workers and Employers in Observance of *National Employ the Older Worker Week*

Department hosts Annual Awards Luncheon in Springfield

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Department on Aging today hosted its annual Older Workers Awards Luncheon to recognize older workers and their employers. The Department hosts this event each year in conjunction with ***National Employ the Older Worker Week*** to honor older workers who continue to play a very important role in the Illinois workforce and across the nation. This year marks the 25th awards ceremony, which was held at the Northfield Inn, in Springfield.

This year *Nat'l Employ the Older Worker Week* is September 21-25. Each year the observance marks the anniversary of the Older Americans Act and proves an appropriate time to recognize how communities benefit from the contributions of older workers who have remained on the job.

More than 6 million people older than age 65 remain in the work force according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment of workers age 65 and over has increased more than 100 percent, during the past decade and that number will undoubtedly increase with more Baby Boomers deciding to put off retirement.

During today's ceremony, awards were presented to older workers who are employed in both public and private sector jobs including workers funded through Title V of the Older Americans Act, which assists low-income seniors looking to re-enter the workforce. Awards were also presented to businesses and companies that regularly employ workers age 55 and older.

The list of the 2009 awardees follows:

Public/Private Sector Employee of the Year (5):

Doris Dobbs, 78, of Chicago, was nominated by Community Care Systems, Inc., of Chicago. Dobbs is punctual and adapts herself to each situation. She has a very caring nature and is appreciated by clients and supervisors. Dobbs is also very active in her community, volunteering at a homeless shelter as a counselor to women. She is also a missionary at her church and helps to feed homeless each week.

Carolyn Sue Duvall, 66, of Enfield, was nominated by Community Care Systems, Inc., of Fairfield. Duvall has worked for Community Care Systems for the past 21 years. She is described as dependable and strives to live up to the commitment of quality service. She's an inspiration and motivates co-workers to perform their work to their best ability. Duvall serves on the town board of Enfield and volunteers in the community.

Lois Kropp, 88, of Cordova, was nominated by Project NOW, Inc., Community Action Agency, of Rock Island. As a congregate meal site manager with Project Now for 20 years, Kropp began her career when most people think of retiring. She adapted to changes with the program over the years, and fostered its expansion. Kropp volunteers and prepares 15 congregate meals and nine home-delivered meals, daily, and believes the most important part of her job is to be with people enjoying the social atmosphere she worked hard to create.

Dennis Rosa, 60, of Northbrook, was nominated by Frisbie Senior Center of Des Plaines. Rosa's supervisor describes him as hard working with a winning disposition and attitude. Senior Center staff describes him as a brilliant multi-tasker and say his can-do attitude is refreshing. Rosa is always willing to learn new computer programs and puts his heart and soul into whatever task is assigned.

Nora St. Germain, 65, of Machesney Park, was nominated by Community Care Systems, Inc., of Rockford. St. Germain does those extra little things for her clients to show that she cares, and tries to keep them in good moods. She serves as an inspiration for younger employees and instills in them the importance of being on time and maintaining a strong work ethic and positive attitude.

Title V Employee of the Year (7):

Yan Hui Deng, 75, of Chicago, was nominated by the Chinese American Service League (CASL). Deng is an Activity Assistant at CASL's Pine Tree Senior Council and loves to work with older clients. As a senior and new immigrant, he understands their needs. He has made great efforts to help them in answering questions, explaining programs and solving problems. He is dependable, enthusiastic and carries out his duties diligently. He is also described as cooperative and flexible.

Jane Lee, 76, of Mattoon, was nominated by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) for her part-time position with the Experience Works program. Lee handles benefit packets given to claimants who file unemployment. Her attendance, dependability and punctuality are exemplary, as is her attitude. Even as she battles cancer, Lee comes to work and performs her tasks with a positive attitude.

Lois Nippe, 68, of Newton, was nominated by Southeastern Illinois Agency on Aging. Nippe helps at the senior center where she works in the kitchen to provide meals for seniors in Jasper County. Certified in Food Sanitation, Nippe is a born leader and uses her talents to help others. She is described as a "pacesetter" and always sees the good in a situation. Despite back problems and other health problems, Nippe takes her duties very seriously and never complains.

Patricia Pierce, 62, of Galesburg, was nominated by the Galesburg Police Department, where she works. Pierce has a theory that any business, especially with regard to public safety, must run like a fine-tuned machine. Before training with the Galesburg police, Pierce received an Associates Degree in Secretarial Science focusing on documentation and computer entry. She is developing an intranet page for the 911 communications team. Pierce goes "above and beyond" to ensure a high level of organization.

Jean Thompson, 65, of Chicago, was nominated by the Illinois Department on Aging, where she assists at the reception desk and handles office duties. When given an assignment to complete, she is very efficient, accurate and timely. Thompson takes pride in her work and always demonstrates a pleasant attitude. She is a dedicated worker who considers the welfare of seniors as her priority, and always goes the extra mile to refer them to services that can help them.

Naomi McKinnis, 76, of Chicago, was nominated by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services. McKinnis works at the Atlas Senior Center where she oversees supplies and serves daily meals. McKinnis is certified in food sanitation and considered outstanding by her supervisor. She volunteers at the food pantry operated at St. Ailbe Catholic Church and at the McKinnis Memorial Foundation, which offers scholarships to inner-city African-American youth.

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Wyatt Hirsch Zimmerman, 64, of Tilton, was nominated by East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging. Zimmerman is the Title V Program Assistant at the Work Net Office, in Danville. She works with current enrollees get the assistance they need, and also helps individuals who may not be enrolled in the program to receive needed assistance. Zimmerman makes referrals and connects individuals with local nutrition, energy assistance, housing, weatherization and other programs. Her motto is, "I want to help everyone over the age of 55 find a job or get the assistance they need."

Employers of the Year (2):

Adult Comprehensive Human Services (ACHS), West Frankfort, was nominated by the Egyptian Area Agency on Aging. ACHS offers personal time, paid holidays, and mileage reimbursement to employees, as well as regular training on timely matters, such as scams, in order to better serve older clients. Of the 76 workers ACHS has in Franklin, Jackson and Williamson counties, 34 are age 50 and older.

Hillsboro Public Library, Hillsboro, was nominated by the Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland. The library has one full-time position, seven part-time positions and most employees are age 55 and older. Hillsboro, which has served as a host site for Title V enrollees for the last eight years, is progressive with programs ranging from computer training for seniors, assistance with job applications, to life skills and intergenerational programs.

Title V Host Agency Employers of the Year (2):

(Title V refers to the Senior Community Service Employment Program sponsored by the Illinois Department on Aging. The program assists workers age 55 + in the job market. It operates under a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor under Title V of the Older Americans Act).

Addus Health Care, Quincy, was nominated by the West Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging. Addus employs 110 workers, 41 of whom are age 55 and older. Addus emphasizes "on-the-job" and continual in-service training. Flexible schedules are worked out to accommodate the needs of older workers. The agency networks with employment specialists to see older employees, who they value especially for mentoring younger staff.

Casa Central, Chicago, has a long and proud record of service to the elderly, and has also maintained a strong commitment to unemployed workers with limited assets. Casa Central continues to hire Title V workers and promotes them from part-time trainees to permanent staff. Each worker is assessed, counseled, and receives appropriate training. Workers who enter frightened or depressed find support and encouragement at Casa Central.

Title V Sub-Grantee of the Year:

Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland, Inc., of Springfield was chosen because of its commitment to the older worker. The Illinois Department on Aging reports the Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland exceeded performance goals and emerged as the front runner of all the Department's sub-grantees for the Title V program. The Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland excels in recruitment, training and employment for older workers, and also provides exceptional outreach and assistance for those older individuals who may not qualify for the program.

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