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News Release

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IL Department on Aging Recognizes the Dedication of Advocates During the Annual Elder Rights Conference

Awards Ceremony coincides with Elder Abuse Awareness Month in IL

SCHAUMBURG – The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) hosted the 24th Annual Elder Rights Conference, this week, in Schaumburg. Each year the Department hosts the conference in July which is *Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month* in Illinois. This year, IDoA co hosted the conference with Illinois TRIAD, that works with law enforcement to coordinate a statewide response to the critical issue of crime against seniors. This year’s conference, themed *Chart the Future: Working Together for Older Adults*, presented a chance for law enforcement to join with service providers, senior advocates and other professionals to focus on elder abuse prevention. The conference ran Wednesday, July 14 through Friday, July 16, offered various workshops and concluded with the 2010 Elder Rights Awards Ceremony.

“The Elder Rights Conference provides an opportunity to develop and build new partnerships with other advocates who are also working to ensure the health and safety of older adults in Illinois,” said IDoA Director Charles Johnson. “And I am pleased to recognize some of the state’s exceptional public servants who are dedicated to helping our greatest generation live their lives to the fullest.”

At the conference, individuals from around the state were recognized for their continued dedication and passion for elder rights. IDoA presented the *2010 Elder Abuse & Ombudsman Awards* and the Illinois Attorney General’s Office named the *2010 Elderly Service Officers*.

IDoA named Natasha Belli, Judy Ellet and Olga Perry as winners of the *2010 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman Award*. ShaTonya Herring was recognized as the *2010 Outstanding Elder Abuse Caseworker*.

Natasha Belli - *Winner of the 2010 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman Award* - works for DuPage County Community Services, Senior Services Division, in Wheaton. Her role as an advocate has been paramount and she has helped propel the county’s program to help seniors. She works part time hours, but makes herself available as needed. Belli also helps train new ombudsmen and volunteers.

Judy Ellet - *Winner of the 2010 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman Award* - works for Shawnee Alliance for Seniors Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, in Carterville. She is well respected and recognized for her in-depth knowledge of ombudsman legislation, rules and regulations. Considered the ultimate advocate, Ellet is the “go to” person in southern Illinois for help with nursing home issues.

Olga Perry - *Winner of the 2010 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman Award* - volunteers through I Care, in Springfield. For 10 years, she has served as the lead advocate for Morgan County. She never stops working on behalf of clients who are being mistreated. Perry actively recruits other volunteers for the program and serves as a mentor for volunteers.

ShaTonya Herring - *Winner of the 2010 Outstanding Elder Abuse Caseworker* - works for DuPage County Community Services, Senior Services Division, in Wheaton. Unlike many caseworkers who become easily frustrated, Herring is empathetic and demonstrates an understanding that allows her to evaluate her clients, support them, validate their feelings and develop the bond of trust.

The Illinois Attorney General's Office announced this year's *Outstanding Elderly Service Officers* as **Lieutenant Kevin Williams** of the Kane County Sheriff's Department in Elgin, Officer **Coralyn Hudik** of the Chicago Police Department's 6th District, **Officer Dawn Odoi** of the Bloomingdale Police Department, and **Sergeant William Cushman** of the Manteno Police Department. **Lieutenant Jeff Murphy** of the Chicago Police Department was named the winner of the *2010 Elderly Service Officer of the Year*.

For more information about Elder Rights, including the *Break the Silence Campaign* to promote Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention, log on to the IDoA website at www.state.il.us/aging or call the Senior HelpLine at 800-252-8966 (or TTY for the hearing impaired at 888-206-1327.)

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