



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IL Dept on Aging Honors Advocates Who Assist Older Adults

Awards Ceremony held during the 2010 Governor's Conference on Aging

CHICAGO – December 10, 2010. The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) today hosted its annual awards ceremony to recognize individuals and organizations whose contributions and accomplishments in assisting older adults merit recognition. Each year the awards ceremony serves as the final event during the *Governor's Conference on Aging* where advocates and experts from across the state gather to focus on issues that affect the aging population. This year's conference was December 8-10 at the Chicago Marriott Downtown.

"These individuals and organizations put a great deal of time and effort into addressing the needs of older adults," said IDoA Director Charles D. Johnson. "And getting together for this conference, which is the largest statewide meeting of those who work in the aging network, provides the perfect setting to honor them."

One of this year's award winners was the Honorable Lisa Madigan, Attorney General for the State of Illinois. Ms. Madigan received the *Sid Granet Aging Network Achievement Award* on behalf of the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging for her aggressive legal action against those taking advantage of older adults. She has been instrumental in drafting legislation and launched "Operation Guardian," which brings together state and local law enforcement and health inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections of nursing homes to ensure compliance and to remove residents with outstanding warrants.

"I'm honored today to receive this award from the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging," said Attorney General Lisa Madigan. "These are very tough times for all of us, and seniors have been hit particularly hard. It is imperative we protect them from both physical and financial harm. I am proud to accept this award in recognition of the important work that my office does every day to ensure that older citizens are treated with the respect they deserve."

Several awards were also presented by professional associations to individuals and organizations in the Aging Network who provide best services to assist older adults. A list of the 2010 presenters and awardees follows:

IDoA Director Johnson presented the Governor's Award for Excellence to **Carol Aronson**, director of Shawnee Alliance for Seniors and Shawnee Health Service, in Carterville. Under Aronson's leadership, The Alliance operates programs including case coordination, case management, elder abuse, regional ombudsman, money management, and gerontological in-home counseling, which assists older adults in the lower 13 counties of Illinois to maximize their independence and remain in the community.

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The Illinois Adult Day Service Association presented two awards:

- The *Sunlight Award* went to **Brenda Jarog**, of the DeKalb Adult Day Center, in DeKalb. Jarog gives 150 percent of herself to make the center the best it can be for the clients. She developed an enclosed patio area for clients, spent Memorial Day building an enclosed wooden fence in the parking lot, and spearheaded a fundraiser to pay for the materials.
- The *Everything Under the Sun Award* went to **Addus Evergreen Club** of Homewood. Addus offers activities in a group setting including a young adult group, which serves those with autism, or whom are developmentally delayed or have low physical or cognitive functioning. The club also offers teaching skills and weekly spiritual services and provides an atmosphere for learning, fun, comfort and teamwork.

Illinois Council of Case Coordination Units presented the *Care Coordinator of the Year* to **Leann Sosamon**, with Community Care Systems, of Bloomington. Sosamon often completes her assignments early in the month so she can help other case managers struggling to see all their clients. She is willing to work during her days off when the office is short-staffed. She is a wonderful advocate for clients, presenting them with all viable options and treats them with the utmost dignity and respect.

AARP Illinois presented the *Andrus Award for Community Service* to **Joseph Bender**, of West Peoria. Bender is always on the move, even at 90 years old. He's been an instructor with the AARP Driver Safety Program for more than 20 years, and has volunteered for more than 25 years with the Share Foods program to feed low income families. Next month, he will receive the "Veterans Award" for 85 years of scouting service.

The Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly (CLESE) presented the *Pillar of Service Award* to **Homer Ashurian**, of the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation (AUAF), in Chicago. Ashurian was born in Iran and worked in education and government before coming to the United States to escape persecution. He started working with the AUAF and has worked to build strong support and social services for Assyrian refugees, immigrant elderly and students.

The Illinois Association of Community Care Program Homecare Providers announced the *Supervisors of the Year* and winner of the *D. Jeanne Tippett Scholarship*:

- **Sharon K. Beksell**, with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, in Rockford, began her career as a homecare aide, in 2006. It was soon apparent that Beksell is extremely compassionate and caring toward clients. Three years later she was named a supervisor. She currently works with 46 homecare aides (serving 112 participants) to recruit, train, monitor, schedule and make field visits.

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- **Kathy Stark**, of Community Home Environmental Learning Project (CHELP), in Decatur, started with CHELP three years ago and ascended to a Homemaker Supervisor position. She quickly developed the skills necessary to help clients in a very professional manner. Stark supervises 29 Homecare Aides who are responsible for more than 100 clients. She is assigned many of the more challenging participants due to her skill in improving any situation.
- **Sheila J. Hastings**, of Community Care Systems Adult Day Service Inc., in Quincy, is winner of the *D. Jeanne Tippett Scholarship*. Hastings is a widow who returned to school to earn a degree as a social worker. Known for being a hard worker, who is dependable, trustworthy, and compassionate, she has dedicated her life to helping others.

Illinois Association of Nutrition Providers presented the *Joyce Still Memorial Award* to **Debbie Weber**, with Golden Circle Nutrition, in Effingham. She has been director since 1978 and is a past president and vice president of the Illinois Association of Nutrition Program Providers. Weber served on various committees for the association, including Education and Legislative, and has been instrumental in conducting strategic planning as the association moves forward. She is also very active as a volunteer in Effingham County.

The Association of Illinois Senior Centers presented the *Mind, Body and Spirit Award* to:

- **Mascoutah Senior Services Program, in Mascoutah, and Senior Center Director Sandra Hakanson**. The center offers programs that enrich the lives of seniors including a project where seniors tell their personal stories, a clothing exchange to update their wardrobes and free classes in Tai Chi, yoga and line dancing.
- **Oswegoland Seniors, in Oswego, and Executive Director Robert L. Wyngard**. The center is considered a haven by some of the 500 seniors who take part in programs. The center developed out of a need to provide subsidized nutrition and quickly grew into a full-fledged senior center. It's located in a retired school building in Kendall County, which has one of the fastest growing senior populations in the state, and has a team of more than 60 volunteers.

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