



PRESS RELEASE

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IL Dept on Aging Honors Elder Rights Advocates

Awardees Recognized During Elder Abuse Awareness Observance in IL

CHICAGO – July 8, 2011. The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) hosted the 25th Annual Elder Rights Conference this week in Chicago. The conference is held each year in July, *Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month* in Illinois. This year's conference, July 6 - 8, marks the 25th year of hosting service providers, senior advocates and other professionals to focus on the rights of elders.

"This year's conference is a milestone for us in the fight against elder abuse. From this work, we know family members are most often the perpetrators when abuse occurs, most victims experience more than one type of abuse and that financial exploitation remains the most common form of elder abuse. Even though we've seen a rise in the number of elder abuse reports, too many go unreported. Obviously, this type of conference is needed to keep this problem in the spotlight and bring our resources to bear to end elder abuse," said Director Johnson.

The conference concluded with an awards luncheon. The 2011 Elder Rights Awardees included individuals who participated in the first elder abuse caseworker certification training, back in 1989:

- Yvonne Anderson, Visiting Nurses Association of Rockford, Rockford
- Ranelle Eigsti, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet, Kankakee
- Mary Pat Frye, Senior Services Center of Will County, Inc., Joliet
- Cindy Gunderson, Catholic Charities, Northwest Senior Services, Arlington Heights
- Deborah Hartshorne, Visiting Nurses Association of Rockford, Rockford
- Riki Kauffman, PLOWS Council on Aging, Palos Heights
- Margie Kemp, Shawnee Alliance for Seniors, Carterville
- Rebecca Lerfelt, PLOWS Council on Aging, Palos Heights
- Deborah Matthew, Cumberland Associates, Inc., Toledo
- Marsha Nelson, Shawnee Alliance for Seniors, Carterville
- Evelyn Norman, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Chicago, Round Lake
- Deb Sitz, Solutions for Care, North Riverside
- Louise Starmann, Aging Care Connections, LaGrange
- Mary Lee Tomsa, DuPage County Department of Community Services, Wheaton
- Marilyn Vocker, North Shore Senior Center, Northfield
- Joan Wileman, Stickney Township Office on Aging, Burbank
- Janice Wilkinson, DuPage County Department of Community Services, Wheaton

Three people were honored for efforts to advance the Ombudsman Program and help long term care residents:

- Neyna Johnson, Illinois Department on Aging
- Robyn O'Neill, Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, Evanston
- Cathy Weightman-Moore, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Rockford, Rockford

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The following legislators, who have done meaningful work in the field of elder rights, were also recognized by IDoA for their strong and consistent advocacy and protection of older adults in Illinois:

- The Honorable William Delgado, State Senator
- The Honorable Mary Flowers, State Representative
- The Honorable Gregory Harris, State Representative
- The Honorable Elizabeth Hernandez , State Representative
- The Honorable Kimberly Lightford, State Senator
- The Honorable Heather Steans, State Senator

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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