



PRESS RELEASE

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State Presents Senior Hall of Fame; Governor's Unique Achievement Awards

Seniors Recognized For Service to Their Communities

SPRINGFIELD - October 24, 2011. The Illinois Department on Aging today hosted the annual ceremony to announce the *Senior Hall of Fame* Inductees and to present the *Unique Achievement Awards* on behalf of Governor Pat Quinn. Today's program, held at the Executive Mansion in Springfield, recognized seniors for the special contributions they have made.

The General Assembly initiated the Illinois *Senior Hall of Fame*, in 1994, to honor residents age 65 and older who excel in four categories: Community Service, Education, Performance and/or Graphic Arts and the Labor Force which is in connection to employment. Each inductee is chosen through a statewide nomination and selection process. Since its inception, 83 people have been inducted into the *Senior Hall of Fame*, including the four inductees who were introduced today.

Department on Aging Acting Director Michael Gelder said "We are pleased to introduce the 2011 *Senior Hall of Fame* inductees. We thank you for your contributions and salute you for excelling in your area of service."

Department representatives also thanked Walgreens for their continued support of the awards, each year.

The 2011 Illinois *Senior Hall of Fame* inductees are:

Allen Blessman, of Mason City, is the 2011 inductee of the Community Service category. Blessman has made many contributions including his donation of two downtown buildings to the United Methodist Church, to open a second campus for its outreach ministry. He established the Allen A.H. and Ellen M. Blessman Foundation which provides funds for scholarships; he donated and participated in the planning of the Mason City Public Library; he participated in founding of the Mason City Area Nursing Home; and he participated in founding the First State Bank of Mason City. Blessman is a true leader and philanthropist.

Edward C. Cook, of Batavia, is the 2011 inductee of the Performance and Arts category. For 30 years, Cook has painted intricately detailed miniature paintings – considered rare masterpieces. During that time, he also educated the public on this unique art form. His paintings have been recognized for merit in international miniature competitions, and by the Miniature Artists of America and Whisky Painters of America - two organizations dedicated to promoting miniature art and honoring outstanding artists of miniatures. In 1995, Cook was one of 38 miniaturists invited to London to participate in the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Miniature Society under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth.

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Imogene Drawve, of Beardstown, is the 2011 inductee of the Labor Force category. Drawve operated a nursery school for 35 years. She's been a member of the Cass County Board for 13 years, and served on the Cass County Council on Aging for the past ten years. As a lifelong member of St. Alexius Church, she was instrumental in convincing Catholic Charities to build the St. Anne Residence in Beardstown as an affordable, safe and comfortable apartment complex for independent older adults. And she worked with a group of people from Cass and Schuyler counties to bring public transportation to these counties. Drawve is considered an advocate and tireless public servant.

Roberta Wilson, of Chicago, is the 2011 inductee of the Education category. Wilson worked in Chicago Public Schools, for 36 years, as a grade school and high school teachers' assistant. After retiring, she began to volunteer in schools. She also volunteers at food pantries and homeless shelters. She serves on Illinois Congressman Danny Davis' Education Committee and meets with principals, parents and staff to figure out ways to solve any problems they might be having. Active in many outreach committees, leagues and movements, including the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Wilson has not let up since. At age 84, she still serves as the chairperson of the Third Unitarian Church scholarship program. She is a true humanitarian.

Also presented during today's ceremony, were the *Unique Achievement Awards*. These are given by Area Agencies on Aging throughout the state, honoring groups, individuals and programs that make a positive impact on the lives of seniors in the state.

Carol Kern, nominated by the Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging. Kern has been director of the Mendota Area Senior Services since 1985. She was instrumental in implementing a transportation program in the 10 area townships. Under her leadership, her agency was able to purchase four wheelchair-accessible vans. When Kern feared Mendota Area Senior Services might have to close, she worked to partner with more organizations in Mendota and the surrounding areas to raise funds to maintain services.

Mabel Van Dusen, nominated by Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging. Van Dusen, of Hanna City, has a tremendous history of community service. She founded the Rural Peoria Council on Aging which started more than 20 years ago, as a Care Coordination Unit. Currently the Executive Director of the *Peoria Area Blind People's Center*, Van Dusen has a history of being a champion for older people and people with disabilities.

***Coordinated Point of Entry for Macon County, nominated by the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging.** **This collaboration includes: Starting Point, the Aging and Disability Resource Center at the Macon County Health Department, Community Home Environmental Learning Project (or CHELP), and Decatur Macon County Senior Center.* Coordinated Point of Entry has served more than 3,000 older adults, in the past year. Service includes eligibility screening for programs such as Circuit Breaker, completion of applications for benefits and assistance, counseling about options for home and community based services and supports, referrals to evidence-based healthy aging programs, coordinating with the Center for Independent Living serving Macon County and targeting services to older adults in social and economic need.

Lucille Lucy Drake, (posthumously) nominated by the West Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging. Drake was an active volunteer at the Quincy Senior and Family Resource Center, in Quincy. But those who actually knew her say she was one of the best employees at the senior center. She operated the printing equipment, helped collate documents, and greeted people coming into the center. *Lucy Drake died unexpectedly and is missed by her friends at the Quincy Senior and Family Resource Center.*

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Central Illinois Senior Celebration, nominated by the Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland.

In 1997, agencies serving Springfield seniors came together with a common goal to provide an annual event, free of charge, for persons 55 years of age and older, to raise awareness of services and resources available to assist in planning and maintaining their dignity and independence. The Central Illinois Senior Celebration event is held each year in May for *Older Americans Month*. Partner agencies include:

- Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland
- Illinois Department on Aging
- Illinois Department of Insurance SHIP
- Memorial Medical Center's Department of Volunteers and Community Services
- St. John's Hospital Third Age Living
- Illinois State Library
- University of Illinois Extension, Sangamon Menard Unit
- Sangamon County Department of Public Health
- SIU Healthcare
- Senior Services of Central Illinois
- Springfield Park District/Illinois Senior Olympics

Senior Services Plus and Executive Director Jonathan Becker, of Alton, nominated by the Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois. Becker and his staff, of Senior Services Plus, transformed a school building into a senior center. The onetime gym, now the School House Grill, offers breakfast and lunch, Monday through Friday. The Grill posts the day's menu on a huge blackboard and offers a full service gym setting with a wellness coordinator.

Sister Rose Matthews, nominated by the Egyptian Area Agency on Aging. Sister Rose is affiliated with the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, in Ruma, where she has been a teacher and a principle. Since 1998, she has served as a volunteer with the Shawnee Alliance Volunteer Money Management Program and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. Sister Matthews is said to be very reassuring with clients. Regardless of who or where they are, she says she is happy to be of service to whoever, whenever, wherever.

The Honorable Chief Judge Timothy Evans of the Cook County Circuit Court, nominated by the City of Chicago Area Agency on Aging. Chief Judge Evans has been innovative to the Cook County Court system including, efforts to secure a three-year grant, in 2005, from the U-S Department of Justice, to train judges, law enforcement and senior advocates in creating a seamless system for seniors entering the courts. He created the "Senior Advocacy" area in the Domestic Violence Courthouse to ensure their comfort and safety when coming alone to court for orders of protection, usually against their own family members.

Judge Patricia Banks of the Cook County Circuit Court, nominated by AgeOptions. Judge Banks was recently assigned (by the above mentioned Chief Judge Timothy Evans) to establish an Elder Law and Miscellaneous Remedies Division of the Court. She has involved the strongest advocates for older persons in the region. Judge Banks has organized a rigorous study of best practices and model programs across the nation, and has meticulously identified roles and responsibilities of participants, insisting the assignment and response to senior issues is professional, complete and strategic.

Fred and Rose Trotter, of Loves Park, nominated by the Northwestern Area Agency on Aging. The Trotters are retired teachers and became the Area Agency's first Stanford Chronic Disease Self Management (CDSMP) facilitators, in 2010. They accepted the role and graciously volunteered countless hours to assist and administer a new grant to help people with chronic health conditions. Even with their other commitments, they found time to facilitate four six-week long workshops within the last year. Participants, who attended the workshops to learn life changing health habits, give the Trotters rave reviews. The Trotters are true servants.