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PRESS RELEASE

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State Recognizes Outstanding Elder Rights Workers and Volunteers at its Annual Elder Rights Conference

Conference & awards kick off month long Elder Abuse Awareness Campaign

SPRINGFIELD – July 16, 2012. The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) wrapped up the 26th Annual Elder Rights Conference held last week, in Schaumburg. The conference also served to launch the State's annual *Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month campaign* to increase awareness and urge people to report suspected cases of elder abuse. During the conference, experts shared experiences with professionals in the field to find better ways to work together and extend resources. IDoA concluded the conference by announcing the *2012 Elder Abuse and Ombudsman Awards* which recognizing individuals from around the state for their commitment and service in the area of elder rights.

“The *2012 Elder Abuse and Ombudsman Awardees* represent the network of service providers and advocates who are the critical component to helping elders both in long-term care facilities and those still residing in their communities. We are grateful and encouraged by your willingness to ensure the health and safety of older adults in Illinois”, said IDoA Director John K. Holton, Ph.D.

The *2012 Elder Abuse & Ombudsman Awardees* are as follows:

There are two winners for the *2012 Outstanding Elder Abuse Caseworker of the Year*. Anna Bartoszek and Laurie Sherry tied for the recognition.

Anna Bartoszek works for Aging Care Connections, in LaGrange. An example of her knack for advocacy was working with an elderly man who was being exploited by a female friend. Bartoszek was able to work with attorneys, police, and the man's family for a financial exploitation conviction. The woman is now serving a three year sentence. Bartoszek is also known for her resourcefulness. After an initial visit, she immediately starts thinking about all the different solutions and possible outcomes for a case.

Laurie Sherry works at Catholic Charities, in Chicago. She always goes the extra mile such as during a financial exploitation case when Sherry coordinated a weekend meeting with a client's family from out of state, an attorney and private care agency to set in place a care plan that would prevent future abuse. Sherry is as sensitive to her clients' emotional needs as their physical needs, like when she arranged for temporary care of a client's dog to relieve the client's anxiety during a medical emergency.

The following are the 2012 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman:

Diane Ashland volunteers with DuPage County Senior Services, in Wheaton. Coming from a teaching and counseling background has helped Ashland with addressing the needs of the population she serves. She is an

2012 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman continued:

excellent listener which helps her identify and prioritize the residents' concerns. Ashland's strong familiarity with support networks assists residents to get resources and referrals.

Susan Canter volunteers for Evanston Senior Services. Always willing to step in and go the extra mile, Canter took on duties at an additional facility. She visits residents in other facilities not assigned to her when the regional ombudsman is away for business or vacation, so residents still have services. Canter has the attitude that all parties are working for the residents.

Deborah Goodrich volunteers at Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, in East St. Louis. Goodrich has a professional relationship with the facility administrator and staff, and she is very assertive in her role as advocate for residents. She tries to think up new ways to assist clients and visits them day, night, and weekend. It is not uncommon for Goodrich to spend hours at any given facility resolving issues for residents.

Lesley Grobe volunteers with East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, in Bloomington. Grobe is always checking to see what she can do to help out. She is very passionate about advocacy is 100 percent client driven. To address residents' concerns, Grobe will visit them on nights, weekends and odd hours such as 4:30 a.m., while working full time and taking graduate courses.

Bobby Hall volunteers at ICARE, in Springfield. Hall visits an intermediate care facility which, mostly serves the mentally ill and, requires one hour visit per month. But, during the first half of the year, he made 200 visits for a total of 351 hours at the facility to address various issues on behalf of residents. Hall has been a volunteer for various organizations for more than 35 years always seeking a way around obstacles.

Kathleen Johnson volunteers at the Chicago Department of Family and Supportive Services. Johnson offers to work weekends and evenings to promote the Ombudsman Program. She is a bold and fearless advocate on behalf of residents and despite heavy workloads will question whether she has done enough to help. Johnson has established a strong rapport with police to aggressively defend residents from elder abuse and exploitation.

Jane Kmetz volunteers for Senior Services Center of Will County. Kmetz always wants to keep updated on regulations and education tools that will help in her quest for a better quality of life for residents of long term care. Understanding an ombudsman is not always a wanted presence in a facility, she has turned adversity into respect by working with facility staff toward the common goal of serving residents.

Sister Rose Mathews volunteers with Shawnee Alliance for Seniors, in Carterville. Regular presence is crucial for long term care ombudsman program services and Mathews has had contact with 5,500 residents. During visits she develops relationships with many of the older adults who have no family or support. She is skilled at building trust among residents and encouraging them to advocate for themselves.

Becky Mays volunteers the Effingham City/County Committee on Aging. Mays has a background in elder abuse and, as a registered nurse, has a firm grasp on what is and is not acceptable in the area of resident advocacy. She is patient and professional but does not accept "no" as an answer concerning a client's right. Mays is been known to seek out resources to make sure a client receives the treatment they deserve.

Steve Ostrowski volunteers for the Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Rockford. Ostrowski is well known to residents of long term care, their families, visitors and staff as the "go to" person to get issues resolved. During a sudden and difficult facility closure, he often visited the facility several times a day to make sure residents knew their rights, to assist them in obtaining information, and to provide emotional support. Ostrowski continues to visit residents at their new facility.

2012 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman continued:

Richard Perkins volunteers for Senior Services Association, in Crystal Lake. Perkins is the community ombudsman in Kane and McHenry Counties. His knowledge concerning resident's rights and passion to serve some of the State's most vulnerable are his strongest assets. Residents have expressed they feel safer and that staff now treat them better because Perkins does extra visits and advocates on their behalf.

Pat Willis volunteers for the Center for Prevention of Abuse, in Peoria. Willis knows her role is to represent her clients because often they cannot speak for themselves. She is relentless in the protection of her residents' rights, and is very active in promoting the program. Willis has presented sensitivity training to literally thousands of certified nursing assistance, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses in an effort to give personnel a better understanding of the people they are supposed to serve.

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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