



Governor Pat Quinn  
Director Charles D. Johnson

421 East Capitol Avenue, #100, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1789  
Phone: 217-785-3356, Fax: 217-785-4477, Web: [www.state.il.us/aging](http://www.state.il.us/aging)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 15, 2010

**CONTACT:**

Kimberly Parker 312/814.1577

## **Illinois Department on Aging Honors Older Workers and Their Employers During Annual Awards Luncheon**

### ***Awards in Conjunction with National Employ the Older Worker Observance***

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) today recognized older workers and their employers during the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Older Workers Awards Luncheon, held at the Northfield Inn, in Springfield. Each year, IDoA hosts this event in conjunction with *National Employ the Older Worker Week* to honor older workers who continue to play a very important role in the Illinois workforce.

Each year in September, the *Nat'l Employ the Older Worker Week* observance marks the anniversary of the Older Americans Act and proves an appropriate time to recognize how communities benefit from the contributions of older workers who have remained on the job.

U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics show more than six million people age 65 and older remain in the workforce. And with more baby boomers delaying retirement, the numbers will likely increase with more workers older than 65.

In Illinois, IDoA administers a program, through the Area Agencies on Aging, to provide on-the-job skills training to individuals age 55 and older with limited financial resources. The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is federally funded through Title V of the Older Americans Act also assist low-income seniors who are looking to re-enter the workforce.

“All of us should be very grateful to have such wonderful older adults who continue to work to make our communities in Illinois a better place for future generations. These individuals each have different skills they contribute, but they all share the very special skill of giving to help others. They each serve as an inspiration,” said IDoA Director Charles D. Johnson.

Today’s awardees included both older workers who are employed in both public and private sector jobs including workers funded through Title V of the Older Americans Act, which assists low-income seniors looking to re-enter the workforce. Awards were also presented to businesses and companies that regularly employ workers age 55 and older. And this year, certificates of appreciation were given to the program assistants of SCSEP who do a tireless job to find new host agencies, recruit new enrollees and complete the paperwork for the host agencies, the enrollees and the job seekers.

The list of 2010 Older Worker Awardees follows:

**Public/Private Sector Employee of the Year (6):**

**Margarett Angus, 73, of Sandwich,** was nominated by Dianne Hardekopf. Angus works at Fox Valley Older Adult Services as a home care aide. It's said that she is the first person to laugh at herself, which helps to keep her young and active. She works 40 hours a week and is committed to helping clients remain independent.

**Betty Carlson, 89, of Grayslake,** was nominated by Paula Lugar of UCAN. Carlson is a foster grandparent volunteer at Prairieview School where she shares her gifts, talents and expertise with others. "Grandma Betty", as the children call her, is eager to help in any way. She is a role model and has a positive outlook on life.

**Mary Gillison, 84, of Coulterville,** was nominated by Edith Gray. Gillison has worked for Community Care Systems in Swansea for almost 30 years. She has the "old school" work ethic meaning she takes pride as a home care aide by always being dependable, punctual and having a positive attitude with her clients and staff. Even after a heart attack and eye surgery, she came back to work as soon as possible.

**Connie O'Rourke, 68, of McHenry,** was nominated by Paula Luger, UCAN. As a foster grandparent volunteer for nine years at Duker Elementary Schools, O'Rourke is always willing to assist the students with their academic subjects and motivates them to improve reading and math skills. She is also involved with her church's nursery.

**Pat Poppe, 69, of Bloomington,** was nominated by Jane Chamberlain, President and CEO, YWCA McLean County. Serving as Public Relations and Development Director of the YWCA, Poppe willingly flexes her schedule to meet the demands of the agency. She is results-oriented and a terrific team member. She has the ability to see all sides of an issue and shares her experiences to help makes decisions.

**Cindy Provo, 62, of Cambria,** was nominated by Robert Childers, Director of Williamson County Programs on Aging. For 12 years, Provo has been an outreach worker who goes above and beyond duty. For example, in 2009, she helped a senior whose mobile home was destroyed in a storm. She worked to get the property cleared of debris and found a replacement mobile home at no cost to the senior. She also volunteers for hospice services.

**Title V Employee of the Year (7):**

**Dixie Arthur, 62, of Sullivan,** was nominated by Mid-Illinois Senior Services' Thrift Shop. Sullivan has never been late for work. She begins her day at the Thrift-T Boutique with a cheery greeting and infectious laugh. Her manager says her customer service skills are superb. No matter how small a purchase, Sullivan shows kindness to customers. Despite heart problems and a stroke, many young people do not match her endurance.

**Sylvia Brown, 63, of Springfield,** was nominated by Senior Services of Central Illinois. As a Case Aide, one of Brown's most endearing qualities is her positive attitude. As the agency adjusts to programmatic, policy, and scheduling changes not to mention staff shortages, Brown is happy to do what is needed in order for the seniors to get help. She's also a grandparent raising grandchildren.

**David Kuhn, 58, of DeKalb,** was nominated by Family Services of DeKalb. Kuhn teaches both piano and computer classes at the DeKalb Senior Center and has led several financial planning workshops. He has raised the money needed to pay for class workbooks and instructional materials. Known for his patience and understanding, many seniors he's taught now enjoy more socialization, fun and competition.

**June Leusch, 78, of Chicago,** was nominated by City of Chicago – Department of Family and Support Services, Northwest Regional Center. Leusch plays crucial role as part of the information and assistance team for the center. For the last seven years, she has helped staff and clients, alike. For example she'll break through language barriers to assist clients with limited English speaking ability. In addition to working, she also serves as a volunteer at the center coordinating the Low Income Home Energy Assistance intake service.

**Sheryl Plumley, 63, of Geneseo**, was nominated by Black Hawk Junior College's Community Education Center. Plumley works as assistant grant writer at the college's Community Education Center in Kewanee. She identifies prospective opportunities and then works on proposals. She multi tasks several projects as a skilled researcher and writer, all while serving as caretaker for her 91-year-old mother.

**Cherrie Rogers, 60, of Centreville**, was nominated by Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois. Rogers works in the Illinois workNet Center, in Belleville. Whether helping clients with data input, with the Illinois workNet site or the Illinois Skills Match, she provides assistance and motivates all who come in contact with her. She uses her past homeless experience to motivate her to help the clients.

**Patricia Thompson, 73, of Danville**, was nominated by Debra Ruper and Wyatt Zimmerman. Thompson worked for 18 years at an auto part company before it closed. But, at age 73, she did not retire. She went to work for the Illinois workNet Center, in Danville. Conscientious and committed to excellence, she is currently teaching other seniors how to use the computer. She is certified as a nurse aide, lay minister, and former YWCA rape counselor and also works with dialysis patients.

**Employment Specialist of the Year is Janet Williams, of Rockford**, due to her outstanding efforts to get people employed in Winnebago and Boone counties. She facilitates re-employment support groups called the "Senior Employment Support Network" and has successfully placed 10 workers through the Title V program and three through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Williams reminds people about the challenges facing older workers whether they are unemployed or under-employed.

### **Employers of the Year (3):**

**Ritchie Brothers Auctioneers, of Morris**, under the leadership of Rick Orr, has employed retired operating engineers of the Midwest Operating Engineers Local 150 for more than ten years. The retirees benefit by continuing to work on equipment they have expertise and Ritchie Brothers benefits by having experienced employees. Ritchie has employed more than 125 retirees.

**Midwest Operating Engineers Local 150, of Countryside**, under the direction of President James Sweeney, supports retired engineers who are returning to work for Ritchie Brothers Auctioneers. In addition, President Sweeney has worked with the seniors in implementing a food pantry for out of work engineers.

**Southern Pride Senior Program, of Johnson County**, promotes senior programs within five counties and has a workforce comprised of 64 percent older employees: all site managers, 11 cooks, home-delivered meal drivers and one outreach worker are older than age 55. Southern Pride offers meals, medication management, health screenings and promotions, transportation, and assistance with Medicare D and other programs.

**Title V Host Agency Employers of the Year (2):** *Title V refers to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) sponsored by the Illinois Department on Aging. The program assists workers age 55 + in the job market. It operates under a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor under Title V of the Older Americans Act.*

**Black Hawk College, of Kewanee**, has a long record of commitment to older persons in the workforce. One of the college's primary missions is to retrain adults for new jobs in a changing economy. At the Community Education Center, the Tech Savvy technology training program offers free basic courses covering Internet, word processing spreadsheets, and more. The Center has a friendly environment to help older workers use the resources and learn the skills to help them secure a job.

**CRIS Healthy Aging Center, of Danville**, offers inspiring opportunities for older adults. They provide skills training in the areas of maintenance, clerical and reception, data entry, food service, transportation, and other areas. They also assist seniors with completing Circuit Breaker applications. CRIS has hired five of the enrollees who trained at the center. Several others who trained through CRIS have also found employment.