



PRESS RELEASE

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State Recognizes Elder Abuse Caseworkers & Long Term Care Ombudsmen at the *Adult Protection & Advocacy Conference*

Award ceremony capped the annual conference and awareness campaign

SPRINGFIELD - August 5, 2013. The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) wrapped up the *Adult Protection & Advocacy Conference*, held July 31 through August 2, in Oak Brook. The conference (formerly the Elder Rights Conference) marked the 27th year service providers, advocates and other professionals gathered to learn the latest information on the topic of elder rights. IDoA hosts the conference each summer which usually coincides with the state's *Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention* campaign in July. At the conclusion of the annual conference was an awards ceremony to recognize this year's winners for their commitment and service in the area of elder rights. (The *2013 Outstanding Elder Abuse Caseworkers & Long Term Care Ombudsman Awardees* are listed below).

"These special caseworkers and ombudsmen provide assistance to older adults who live in their homes as well as residents of long-term care facilities. The *2013 Outstanding Awardees* represent a network of providers and advocates who are committed to the health and safety of our clients. We thank you and salute you for your dedication," said IDoA Director John K. Holton, Ph.D.

In addition to Friday's awards ceremony, IDoA also recognized the Honorable William R. Haines, state senator of the 56th Illinois Legislative District, and the Honorable Greg Harris, state representative of the 13th Illinois Legislative District, for their work on the Adult Protective Services bill (SB1164 & HB948). On Thursday, the two legislators attended the conference that is now named for the Adult Protective Services unit at IDoA.

2013 Outstanding Elder Abuse Caseworker Nominees are:

Wilbella Greer works for the Healthcare Consortium of Illinois, in Chicago. She is discerning and dedicated making sure all her cases receive the proper priority and is known to have cancelled birthday plans to serve as a liaison for a family meeting concerning a clients who was being evicted. With an extensive network of strong relationships, Wilbella Greer is able to get immediate responses from partner agencies to help her clients.

Nancy Kauffold works for Senior Services of Central Illinois, in Springfield. Just one example of her devotion involves a client with developmental disabilities who was missing and police could not locate. Due to her determination and insistence police continue to search, the client was ultimately located. The client now has a guardian and lives in a safe environment. When situations seem hopeless, Nancy Kauffold does not give up.

Tom Scott works at Elder Care Services, in DeKalb. He served as a police officer for 27 years then, after retirement and sparked by the love and respect for his own parents, became an advocate for the elderly. This led to a new career as an elder abuse caseworker. Whether sitting with clients as they share happy or sad news, having their back at a potentially dangerous home visit or talking down an abuser, Tom Scott is the ultimate supporter.

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The *2013 Elder Abuse Caseworker of the Year* is **Carmie Hanley** who works for Catholic Charities Northwest Senior Services, in Arlington Heights. Perseverance best describes her commitment to help clients like in the case of an older client with developmental disabilities who was the victim of financial exploitation. Some unscrupulous neighbors befriended him to get money and were in the process of selling his house. She worked with authorities to build a case against the abusers. The client now has a guardian and is safe because of Carmie Hanley.

The following are the 2013 Outstanding Long Term Care Ombudsman:

Emily Brigman, nominated by I CARE in Springfield, started as an intern with the agency before she was hired as a community ombudsman four years ago. Recognized for her positive outlook and compassion, she has assisted hundreds of residents with her determination to solve problems when hope seems lost. One resident describes Emily Brigman as an “angel who saved my life.”

Kathy Connors, nominated by Catholic Charities Diocese of Rockford, is singled out for her outstanding commitment and dedication to the residents of her assigned nursing home. Her visits to an assigned facility average more than two hours to meet with residents and management. Unafraid to tackle any issue, Kathy Connors handles issues while always respecting the confidentiality of those involved.

Shelia Fernandez, with the Legal Assistance Foundation, started as a paralegal with the foundation before becoming an ombudsman. For nearly ten years she has helped hundreds of residents receive better care and assert their rights. She likes people and it shows in her approach, but it’s said she is no pushover. Shelia Fernandez does what it takes to help residents.

Carolyn Frazier, nominated by Senior Protective Services, is called the epitome of a resident advocate. She makes facility visits at all hours of the day and night, as needed, and has a talent for making residents, their families, friends and staff, feel comfortable enough to share with her. Carolyn Frazier “gets people to tell her things they wouldn’t tell their own mothers,” said one of her fellow ombudsman.

Sharon Jones, with the Chicago Department of Family and Social Services, has proven herself a reliable, highly knowledgeable and passionate advocate on behalf of long term care residents. She is not intimidated by difficult cases or personalities and takes a “results-driven” approach to help, who she calls, “her residents.” Sharon Jones is a leader among her peers and, through her example, challenges others to do better.

Amanda McKeon - Regional Ombudsman Tami Wacker shared a story about this ombudsman who was unable to attend the ceremony. “When I received word about this award, I walked around the office to find nine months pregnant Amanda at her desk working to complete documentation. She giggled even though she had been out in the heat making visits and handling unhappy family members. Amanda handles cases with grace and positivity.”

Shirley Patterson joined the Ombudsman Program in 2006 and currently serves 28 facilities in seven counties. She has a passion for the preservation of an individual’s dignity so she pays particular attention to residents’ hygiene, neatness and dress. Shirley Patterson fights the good fight and it’s been said her compassion is matched only by her determination to preserve the rights of residents.

Tina Penrod, of Shawnee Alliance, goes the extra mile to help residents and other ombudsmen. She successfully manages a full caseload with an average of 30 open cases at a time. But no matter how busy, she is always willing to pitch in whenever and wherever needed. Tina Penrod demonstrates her belief in residents’ rights by putting the resident first to ensure their needs are met.

Nancy Yalowitz, of the City of Evanston, is a retired medical social worker who quickly identifies problems and facilitates solutions. She is assigned to only one facility, but is very active in her community. She teaches at senior facilities and has served on boards and committees including the *Commission on Aging*. Nancy Yalowitz uses every opportunity to promote the ombudsman program which makes her a true advocate for Evanston.

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For more information about programs and services to help older adults and people with disabilities ages 18 to 59 who live in a domestic setting, 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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