



PRESS RELEASE

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State Highlights the Benefits of Older Workers During Awareness Week from September 22nd to 28th

Observance highlights program that provides training to seniors

SPRINGFIELD - September 25, 2013. Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., is encouraging employers to recognize the contributions of older adults in the workplace in observance of *National Employ the Older Worker Week*. Each year during the last full week of September, the observance sponsored by the U.S Department of Labor highlights how communities benefit from the contributions of older workers who have remained on the job. The theme for this year's observance is that older workers are a valuable asset for employers, especially as it relates to mentoring and being a role model for younger workers.

"According to statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor, by next year, 41% of Americans age 55 and older will be employed, accounting for more than 21% of the work force. And since people are healthier and living longer, many will probably remain on the job longer than previous generations of workers. This can benefit employers because older workers have a wealth of knowledge, and can teach skills and mentor newer staff," said Director Holton.

There are many reasons older adults choose to remain in the workforce. A 2013 survey by the National Council on Aging cites the most common reason is to stay active and productive. The second most common reason is respondents said they enjoyed their work, more than 60% said they needed the money, and more than half surveyed said that working gave them a sense of purpose and allowed them to stay connected to other people.

National Employ the Older Workers Week also marks the anniversary of the Older Americans Act of 1965, which led to more program services to benefit older adults. One such program is the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to provide on-the-job skills training to individuals age 55 and older who have limited financial resources. SCSEP is federally funded through a grant from the U.S Department of Labor under Title V of the Older Americans Act. IDoA administers SCSEP through the Area Agencies on Aging and providers at the local level to provide assistance to low-income seniors who are looking to re-enter the workforce.

SCSEP participants are enrolled to work at community service or non-profit agencies usually for 20 hours a week at minimum wage. Through the program they receive personalized employment-related counseling and job-related training designed to assist them in finding permanent employment. Training may include improving existing skills, developing new skills, and educational opportunities.

Since its inception, SCSEP has helped more than one million older Americans re-enter the workforce. Last year in Illinois, 502 older adults participated in SCSEP and 50 participants were hired for permanent employment.

For more information about programs to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, including the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), call the Department on Aging [Senior HelpLine](tel:1-800-252-8966) at 1-800-252-8966, or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.

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