

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

April 13, 2011

Contact: Steve Todd, Health Officer
517-279-9561, ext. 148

Theresa Christner, Health Ed./Health Promotion Dir.
517-279-9561, ext. 144

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Health Policy Champion – Judge Thomas E. Shumaker

(Three Rivers, MI) The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, along with the Michigan Department of Community Health, asks you to join them in celebrating Public Health Week (April 11 – 17) by recognizing its own Public Health Policy Champion. Judge Thomas E. Shumaker, St. Joseph County Probate Court was recognized as one of seven Public Health Policy Champions statewide at a ceremony conducted today at the Capital Rotunda (Lansing) for his work in establishing the St. Joseph County Vulnerable Adult Protocol.



In this photo, left to right: State Senator Bruce Caswell (District 16), MDCH Director Olga Dazzo, Judge Thomas E. Shumaker, St. Joseph County, and State Representative Matt Lori (District 59).

This year's Michigan Public Health Week theme is Safety is No Accident: Live Injury Free. Awardees were selected because of their extraordinary efforts to promote safety and prevent injuries and violence. The Vulnerable Adult Protocol, created by a collaborative group under Judge Shumaker's leadership, seeks to promote safety and prevent injuries and violence among St. Joseph's most vulnerable adults - those who are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation due to mental or physical impairment or advanced age. Specifically, the protocol provides guidance to mandatory reporters with adult protection concerns by defining:

- who is considered a vulnerable adult;
- who are mandatory reporters;
- how to make referrals; and
- what types of interventions should be sought.

Furthermore, the protocol provides direction to health care workers, educators, social service staff and law enforcement agents as to what steps to take to assure this population's safety. Members of the collaborative group included:

- Probate Court,
- Prosecutor's Office,
- Department of Human Services,
- Community Mental Health,
- Sheriff's Department,
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services,
- Long Term Care Ombudsman,
- Commission on Aging,
- Human Services Commission and
- Branch-St. Joseph Area Agency on Aging.

For six months, Judge Shumaker led the group as they developed the resource guide, lending support staff to ensure the works timely completion. Even now, he continues to promote the tool among his colleagues, as well as to local attorneys, law enforcement, medical personnel, school staff, social service agencies, and the entire community.

According to Laura Sutter, Area Agency on Aging Director, "It's rare for a Judge to be so hands-on. Judge Shumaker has really been personally invested in collaborating with other agencies and county departments, and in raising community awareness, in order to assure the best possible product and outcome. The result is a tool that is both innovative and user-friendly. And knowing the Judge, he will use this opportunity to even further promote the Protocol so that it will become a model that other communities can utilize."

The Protocol was the focus of four law enforcement trainings held in St. Joseph County in late September, 2010. It was well-attended by more than 60 law enforcement officers. In the coming months, the protocol will also be the focus of trainings, newspaper editorials and presentations to the county's bar association and medical society. Additional tools are also being developed which are based on the protocol and can be used by law enforcement while in the field.

Steve Todd, Health Officer of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency congratulates Judge Shumaker on his award and states "Judge Shumaker is a real friend to public health, as well as a friend to all of St. Joseph County. He is well deserving of this award. The Protocol represents the type of public health policy initiative that is tangible and effective in raising awareness of abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable people. We are excited to track improvements in health status and injury related indicators which will result as organizations adopt this protocol."

Judge Thomas E. Shumaker is the Probate Judge of St. Joseph County also serving in the Family Court of the 45th Circuit Court, being the presiding Judge of the delinquency and protective division. He is in his fourth term, serving since January 1,

1989. He resides in Sturgis, Michigan, with his wife Judy. He is a lecturer to the Probate Registers and Probate Judges, and a teacher at the New Judges School and for the Michigan Judicial Institute.

Judge Shumaker has been active in the Michigan Probate Judges Association on its executive committee for 20 years and served as president in 2007-2008. He has been on many State Bar of Michigan Committees, including being a member of the Judicial Conference for 18 years. He has served on many task forces, including Michigan Bar Association Task Force on Children in Courts, Domestic Violence Coordination of Courts.

In addition to helping to author the Vulnerable Adult Protocol and its recent revision, he has a special interest in the PPO process and its efficiency. He also is interested in protecting children from neglect and abuse and helped found the Human Services Commission by St. Joseph County Courts.

###