

Elder Affairs Honors Long-Term Care Ombudsman as Employee of the Year

William Teague has an unlimited passion for helping others.

As a regional supervisor with the Department of Elder Affairs' Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Will helps safeguard the rights of elders in nursing homes, adult living facilities and other long-term care locations. His commitment to others doesn't stop when the regular workday is done – Teague has repeatedly stepped forward to help victims of natural disasters in Florida and around the country.

In recognition of his exemplary service to others, Will Teague was recently honored with the Department's prestigious "Employee of the Year" award.

"Although we had an outstanding group to choose from," said Department Deputy Secretary Chuck Corley, "Will was chosen because he has repeatedly gone above and beyond the call of duty during several natural disasters, all while maintaining his workload as a Regional Ombudsman Supervisor."

As a leader within the Ombudsman program, Teague helps supervise efforts to assist Florida's more than 160,000 long-term care facility residents. He works out of the program's Lakeland office.

In addition to the multiple responsi-



Elder Affairs Deputy Secretary Chuck Corley presents William Teague, a supervisor with the Department's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, with the 2008 "Employee of the Year" award.

bilities of his daily routine, Teague also makes time to volunteer for numerous disaster relief activities. Last summer, he led a team of Elder Affairs employees that went to Cedar Rapids at the request of the Department's Iowa counterpart.

Devastating floods had wracked the Cedar Rapids community, and Teague stepped up to actively help the victims recover. Will and the rest of the Florida team helped get essential services to the survivors, spending their Fourth of July holiday with many displaced Iowa elders. The extensive damage left behind by the floodwaters made an impression on several members of the group, particularly Teague.

"The experience I had was a humbling one, to say the least," he said. "I was able to witness first-hand the best of what humanity has to offer. The people of Iowa are unified; they are some of the most patriotic and giving people that I have ever met."

Inspired by what he learned in Iowa, Teague stepped up again a few months later, this time closer to home – helping the victims of Tropical Storm Fay. After the storm's drenching rains caused major problems for millions of Floridians, Teague volunteered to help staff a local Disaster Recovery Center. This effort proved how vital an asset Teague is to the Department's emergency coordinating office.

"Whenever we have a need to prepare, respond and recover from an event, we can always count on Will Teague to be there to help elders and make sure that their needs are prioritized and quickly addressed," said Fran Brooks, the Department's Emergency Coordinating Officer.

Although he is praised for his exceptional work during natural disasters, Teague's dedication to Florida's long-term care residents is also unsurpassed. As a leader in the Ombudsman program, he helps coordinate volunteers' efforts to check on nursing home and assisted living facility residents to make sure their rights are being respected. Elders, caregivers and concerned citizens also have the option to call their local Ombudsman office to file a complaint.

State Ombudsman Brian Lee knows how important Teague is to his program's operation. "He demonstrates a servant's heart for elders in his care and commitment to protect their health, safety and welfare," Lee said. "He is a strong advocate who represents the interests of Florida's most frail and vulnerable population to ensure that they receive the highest care and best life attainable."

In return, Will Teague is the Department of Elder Affairs' Employee of the Year.

Important Trends in a Changing Environment

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is working to help them find the service providers who need them.

Injury Prevention

More than one-third of American adults 65 and older suffer falls each year. Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths.

Through a partnership with the Department of Health's Office of Injury Prevention, AARP and the local Area Agencies on Aging, the Department will be offering a series of fall prevention symposiums to increase awareness of fall prevention techniques.

The symposiums will focus on nutri-

tion as a protective factor in preventing falls, as well as strategies to enhance muscular and neurological abilities. Additionally, symposium participants will learn ways to create a safer living environment. If you are interested in participating in one of these symposiums, check the listing of upcoming events on the Commu-

nities for a Lifetime website at www.CommunitiesforaLifetime.org.

With more than 4.3 million seniors living in Florida's communities, we definitely have our work cut out for us. However, serving older Floridians is just one more way we can better our communities.