



## MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Weiss Awards in support of Michigan children and families presented in Mount Pleasant**

LANSING, MI, October 30, 2014 – The fourth Honorable Robert E. Weiss Award ceremony, named in honor of the late Robert E. Weiss, Judge of the Genesee County Probate Court and a beloved advocate for children, was recently held in Mt. Pleasant. These awards recognize important accomplishments and collaborative efforts in support of children and families across Michigan.

Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr. said, “It is easy to say you are committed to helping children and families. What is hard is delivering on that commitment. The recipients of these awards all delivered positive results for Michigan’s children through their creativity, leadership and willingness to collaborate.”

**Saginaw Family Court Judge Faye Harrison** is the recipient of the award for **Excellence in Creative Solutions**, which acknowledges a team for implementing creative strategies to overcome barriers in court and agency processes. The Saginaw County team includes Harrison, the County DHS director, the DHS foster care section manager, foster care supervisor, as well as private agency directors, and the permanency resource manager. They continue to consider individual families and children to determine barriers and take creative steps to remove them. "Team Saginaw" has expanded to include representation from Saginaw County Community Mental Authority, the involvement of the permanency resource manager, and several private agencies.

**Tuscola County Judge Nancy Thane** is the recipient of the award for **Excellence in Collaborative Leadership**. This award is designed to recognize an individual or team that has gone “above and beyond” to coordinate relationships that improve the local child welfare system. She holds quarterly meetings to which she invites Tuscola County attorneys who work with neglect and abuse cases, DHS administration and staff, private agencies, counseling agencies, and other community partners. Thane, who advocates for strong communication between the attorneys and the DHS staff and supervisors, encourages positive relationships that benefit children and families and speed up court processes for families.

**Midland County Judge Dorene Allen** is the recipient of the award for **Excellence in Judicial Leadership**. This award lauds a judge for showing leadership and commitment to children. Allen is a strong leader who continues to support evidence-based programs: "Baby Court" in collaboration with Community Mental Health of Central Michigan and DHS to assure infants have frequent and quality interactions with their parents in a therapeutic environment. Allen regularly assists DHS in meeting placement needs of children as the court operates a child-

placing agency license for foster care to maintain delinquent children. She has established programming that has reduced the delinquency rate by almost 80% since 1998, residential placements of delinquent youth have been reduced by 95%, all while maintaining "under budget" financial status. She is an active participant in the DHS Pathways to Potential Program, which has provided prevention services to families. Allen presents information to children through the Midland school system to promote respect for self and others. Floyd and Eastlawn Elementary School's Truancy Program, JCC Paw Pals (Therapy Dog), Midland Mentors, and Recovering Youth Futures are other community collaboration efforts that have significantly impacted community and families.

**Department of Human Services Director Maura Corrigan** was the recipient of a surprise presentation of an honorary Robert E. Weiss Award for "**Tearing Down the Silos.**" The award was presented to her by Ionia Probate Judge Sykes on behalf of all the probate judges present at the Forum. The award is based on a phrase Director Corrigan has used for many years, and just recently when she gave public testimony to the Federal Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities when Commission members visited Michigan in late August 2014. She has championed the call for cross-system collaboration; the need to coordinate child welfare with other human services as well as across the three branches of government.

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