



## PRESS RELEASE

Administrative Office of the Courts

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### **For Immediate Release**

### **COURT RAISES AWARENESS OF ELDER ABUSE & COORDINATES A FREE TRAINING WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY 2011**

Judge Manuel Menendez, Chief Judge of the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Florida, issued a Resolution on Wednesday, recognizing World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in the jurisdictional boundaries of his court, which covers all of Hillsborough County. “We’re very grateful to Chief Judge Menendez for signing the Resolution,” said Magistrate Sean Cadigan, the Director of the Court’s Elder Justice Center, “and for the support of the judges and court staff of the 13<sup>th</sup> Circuit in recognizing this day as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.” The Court joined other organizations, in communities and municipalities throughout the world, in acknowledging June 15, 2011 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) and holding events designed to raise awareness of elder abuse. This year marked the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WEAAD, which was first organized in support of the United Nations International Plan of Action, recognizing the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue.

Magistrate Cadigan explained that wearing purple has become a symbol of this awareness campaign, since the color is recognized worldwide to represent dignity, respect & royalty and can serve as a reminder of how communities should be treating our elders. Staff from the Elder Justice Center (EJC) handed out nearly 500 purple awareness ribbons at an information table set up in the lobby of Edgecomb Courthouse in downtown Tampa on Wednesday. Visitors at the busy courthouse were able to ask questions about elder abuse and pick up informational brochures provided to help people understand what elder abuse is, how to recognize it, and what to do about it when they see it. The EJC Victim Advocate, Gina Vittone, was on hand, fielding hundreds of questions and informing courthouse visitors about a valuable educational opportunity that EJC is organizing in collaboration with Florida’s Department of Children & Families (DCF). The training is scheduled for Thursday, July 14, 2011, and representatives from various local agencies, which routinely address issues of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, will be present to share information on the topic with the public and staff from local aging services providers. The training is open to all and will be held at the DCF office, located at 9393 North Florida Avenue in Tampa, from 9:00a.m. - 12:00p.m. Free parking is available at that site.

To help emphasize the need for greater elder abuse awareness, Magistrate Cadigan pointed out that the older population in America is continuing to grow and will burgeon between the years of 2010 and 2030, when the “baby boom” generation reaches the age of 65. It is estimated that by 2030 there will be about 72.1 million older persons in America, comprising almost 20% of the total population, nearly twice as many as in 2007.



Chief Judge Manuel Menendez, Jr. along with Elder Justice Center Director, Sean Cadigan and Victim Advocate, Gina Vittone with the Proclamation Judge Menendez signed designating June 15, 2011 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit.

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*The Elder Justice Center was founded in October 1999 and its general mission is to remove barriers and enhance the linkages between seniors and the court system, as well as social and legal services. The specific goals of the Elder Justice Center are to:*

- *To provide a designated facility to respond to the needs of the seniors in the community – including information and referrals.*
- *To provide public education to the elderly and those who work with them.*
- *To coordinate access to existing agencies that presently provide services to seniors and provide case management services as needed (non-court case connected case management for elder non-victims).*
- *To provide case management/victim services to victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation (court case connected case management for elder victims).*
- *To provide case management and monitoring services in guardianship cases (for wards of the court).*

*As part of this mission, the Elder Justice Center engages in both public education programs to older adults and their families, referral of older adults having contact with the judicial system to social service agencies, and the supervision and case management of wards adjudicated incapacitated in the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit.*

*For more information, please visit our website at: [www.fjud13.org](http://www.fjud13.org), navigating to Court Programs and then to the Elder Justice Center.*