



## PRESS RELEASE

Administrative Office of the Courts

Wednesday, October 13, 2010

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Court Recognizes Florida Guardianship Month**

TAMPA – Judge Manuel Menendez, Chief Judge of the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Florida, is joining the Elder Justice Center (EJC), one of the Court's programs, in recognizing October as Florida Guardianship Month, a time to celebrate the work of dedicated individuals who serve as legal representatives for Hillsborough County residents who cannot make their own decisions and have no one else to assist them. In a Resolution, issued on October 1<sup>st</sup>, Chief Judge Menendez, on behalf of the judges and court staff recognized October as Guardianship Month in this Circuit and extended greetings and best wishes to all observing October 2010 as Florida Guardianship Month. EJC has organized two free trainings for professional guardians during the month.

“Guardians provide an essential service not just to their wards, but to the courts who rely on them. Trust, confidence and loyalty are all part of the character of a great guardian. We appreciate their contributions daily, but especially during this month long recognition,” said Judge Claudia Rickert Isom, who is the Administrative Judge of the Probate, Guardianship & Trust Division of the Court.

Added EJC Program Director Sean Cadigan: “Hillsborough County guardians are a very important piece of local social service network, and they are crucial to the safety and well-being of our incapacitated citizens. Thanks to the dedication of legal guardians, the wards of our Court can have someone looking out for their personal and financial interests, day in and day out.”

Governor Charlie Crist issued a proclamation declaring October as Florida Guardianship Month, part of a nationwide recognition of the important work of guardians. Guardians serve as legal representatives for Floridians who no longer have the ability to make their own decisions about their personal care or financial affairs. Some of these citizens are fortunate enough to have family or friends available to serve as their guardian or the financial resources with which to pay a professional guardian. However, many of these citizens have no resources, family or friends to help them and, as a result, they end up under public guardianship. In the last year Florida's public guardians assisted more than 2,200 incapacitated persons through 15 public guardianship programs serving 20 Florida counties.

An independent study by the University of Kentucky found that Florida's public guardian programs saved the State of Florida almost \$1.9 million in 2008, mostly by helping incapacitated persons move from costly hospitals to more affordable options, such as assisted living facilities. The researchers also concluded that Florida's public guardian programs produce "significant quality of life savings" for incapacitated persons, ranging from emotional support and improved socialization to reconnecting with family, friends and religious institutions.

Aging Solutions, Inc., the Public Guardian for Hillsborough County, collaborates each year with the Elder Justice Center on a holiday gift drive for wards under public guardianship. This annual "Elves for Elders" event provides both basic necessities and special little gifts for these often forgotten members of our community. For more information on Elves for Elders or guardianship, please look for the Elder Justice Center, under Court Programs at [www.fljud13.org](http://www.fljud13.org)