



Wisconsin State Public Defender

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SPD's 2014 Award Recipients

Rep. Nygren, Ginny VandenBranden, Diane Rondini-Harness, & Ben Gonring to be Recognized

(Madison) The State Public Defender Board and the State Public Defender's Office (SPD) will honor its 2014 award recipients during a ceremony scheduled for November 20 at the State Public Defender's annual conference.

Representative John Nygren and Ginny VandenBranden will each receive a *2014 Eisenberg Award* from the State Public Defender Board in recognition of the positive impact they have made on our criminal justice system. Representative Nygren is being recognized for his groundbreaking HOPE (Heroin, Opiate Prevention and Education) legislation. HOPE made significant changes to Wisconsin's criminal justice approach to the issue of drug addiction, focusing efforts on education and treatment to address the growing problem of opiate addiction in Wisconsin.

As a teacher for the Green Bay Correctional Institution, Ginny VandenBranden created the Challenges and Possibilities Program. Inmates in the program address issues including justice, empathy, forgiveness, victimization, and restorative justice to help them envision how they will live meaningful and responsible lives. Ginny, now in retirement, still volunteers in the program.

During the ceremony, the SPD will also honor two of its staff: Diane Rondini-Harness of the SPD's Milwaukee Juvenile and Mental Health Office; and Ben Gonring of the SPD's Madison Trial Office. Diane Rondini-Harness will receive the SPD's *2014 Chiarkas Award* in recognition of her leadership efforts on juvenile justice issues - specifically, human trafficking. Diane has educated decision makers, policy makers, and the public on this issue, which often results in its victims being coerced into conduct that leads them to face criminal charges, delinquency charges, or other court proceedings. Ben Gonring will receive the agency's *2014 Rubin Society Award* in recognition of his contributions to community outreach. Ben has a



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long history of educating students about the juvenile justice system and encouraging them to avoid the types of actions that can lead to court involvement.

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