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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

10-May-11

Seventh Annual “Walk a Mile In My Shoes” Recognizes May as Mental Health Month *Genesee County residents attend rally to promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma*

Flint, Mich. – Get ready to rally!

Michigan’s 46 Community Mental Health agencies are hosting the seventh annual “Walk a Mile In My Shoes” rally at the state Capitol on Wednesday, May 11. A number of Genesee County residents plan to attend the event to lobby state legislators about mental health issues and to help combat the stigmas and prejudices associated with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and substance use disorders. Eighty-three people who use CMH services, one from each county in the state, will deliver brief statements from the capitol steps about the status of the public mental health system in their counties.

Genesee County will be represented by Desimon Hawkins who will make the following statement from the Capitol Steps: “If the budget gets cut more, there will be more devastating effects on person’s lives with mental illness. Walk A Mile In My Shoes.”

The statement was chosen by the Genesee County CMH Consumer Council to represent Genesee County at the rally. Desimon was part of a citizen’s group at GCCMH’s Rainbow Connection that submitted several statements and appointed Desimon as their representative. Desimon has attended 6 of the past 7 rallies and believes in the strength that individual citizens can have on the legislative process.

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Genesee County Community Mental Health News Release



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The Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards, the educational and political arm of the CMHs in the state, is organizing the rally. MACMHB expects more than 2,200 people at the event, including people who use CMH services, people who work in the CMH system and mental health advocates of all stripes. In 2010 over 1,500 people were in attendance.

The rally starts at 1:30 p.m. on the front lawn of the Michigan Capitol.

“The rally helps showcase the importance of addressing issues facing people with mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance use disorders,” said Danis Russell, CEO of GCCMH. “We have marched in the rally since its inauguration in 2005 and are excited to become a part of it again this year, joining advocates from across the state to bring our message to the public. There is a compelling need to continue to work and understand the realities of mental health and illness, in order to make improvements in our current system.”

In Michigan, one in five adults will experience a mental health disorder at some point in their life, yet many do not get the treatment they need. Goals of the rally are to make sure that everyone who needs treatment for mental health and/or substance use disorders in Michigan is able to get it and to promote a higher awareness of mental health issues among the public, media and legislators.

Genesee County CMH provides services and supports to Genesee County residents who are adults and children with developmental disabilities, adults with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbance and adults and children with substance use disorders. For more information call Customer Services at (810) 257-3705.

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