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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fifth 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 fifth annual “Walk-a-Mile In My Shoes” rally at the state Capitol on Tuesday, May 12. 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.

A contest for a spokesperson for Genesee County CMH was held and judged by GCCMH’s Consumer Council. The winning statement came from Eric Thomas. The statement he submitted and that he will read on the Capitol Steps is: “Don’t make things accessible just because it’s the law. Make things accessible because it’s the right thing to do. Walk A Mile In My Shoes.” Eric is a tireless advocate for accessibility and speaks often about the need for accessibility for everyone.

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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 types. The inaugural event attracted 800 people in 2005 and has been growing annually, reaching 2,000 in 2008.

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 took part in the successful rallies every year since. We are excited to become a part of the impressive 2009 Walk a Mile in My Shoes Rally, and we are eager to once again to join 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. One of the goals is to make sure that everyone who needs treatment for mental health and/or substance use disorders in Michigan is able to get it.

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 for adults and children with substance use disorders. For more information call Customer Services at (810) 257-3705.

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