



VILAS COUNTY CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCY



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Department Receives Certificate of Outstanding Achievement

The economic situation of 2009 saw Wisconsin's unemployment rate hit a 27-year high of 9.4% according to the Department of Workforce Development so winning a Certificate of Outstanding Achievement for 2009 for the Vilas County Child Support Agency came as quite a surprise for Director Eljean Benson when the agency's name was called out at the recent Directors' Dialogue for child support agencies held in Stevens Point on April 22-23.

"This year no one knew ahead of time who won the awards for performance for 2009. Since our agency did not reach the usual 80% benchmark for current support collections, I was thinking we weren't in the running. However, since we showed improvement in our collection rates on current support over 2008 and met all the other criteria, we received the award" stated Benson.

The other criteria for the award was to met or exceed the federal performance standards for paternity establishment (90% or better—Vilas' rate was 110.78%) and court order establishment (80% or better)—Vilas' rate was 94.14%. Vilas County was one of 18 county agencies to have received this award for 2009.

The award is a testament to the hard work by the child support staff which consists of two child support specialists, Joy Schmitz and Margaret Garsow, and fiscal clerk Cherie Klopp, and in 2009, private attorney Norda Bardwell Gromoll who handled the legal aspects for the office, Benson said. Both child support specialists concurred that the economic times have created a challenge for them and for parents that pay and receive child support.

Schmitz indicated that "keeping close contact with the individuals and encouraging them to work together to modify orders if necessary to meet current situations and guidelines promotes an atmosphere

whereby payers can meet their obligations and understanding by payees of the payers' economic situation.”

“Building a rapport with the participants at the very beginning is essential,” added Garsow. “If the participants of the case know that they can call or stop in the office to provide updates and information, whether good or bad, helps to prevent cases from becoming delinquent.”



Photo caption: Child Support personnel Eljean Benson, Director; Margaret Garsow, Joy Schmitz (holding certificate) and Cherie Klopp

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