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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Elder Abuse Training for Law Enforcement

(Centreville, MI) Robert Browning wrote “Grow old with me – the best is yet to be.” But for many senior citizens, this statement is far from true. Frail and ailing seniors can be vulnerable for abuse and neglect. In an effort to protect these seniors, the Branch-St. Joseph Area Agency on Aging (AAA), working with the St. Joseph County’s Prosecutor’s Office and the Human Services Commission, sponsored a two-day training event at the St. Joseph County Intermediate School District. The training was held September 28 and 29, 2010. The purpose of the event was to assist local law enforcement in identifying potential abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable senior citizens.

According to Laura Sutter, AAA Coordinator, “The training was well attended by 60 officers. Participants represented St. Joseph County’s Sheriff’s Department and Sturgis and Three Rivers police departments. In addition, state troopers, as well as many officers from surrounding areas were able to participate. The training worked immediately. We received reports the next day of how the training was used within the community to help seniors remain safer in their own homes.”

The training topics were:

- Detecting abuse and neglect
- Using investigative strategies
- Abuse and neglect in long-term care facilities
- Making human service agency referrals
- Understanding the Law and legal remedies

The training event is just one step in a series. A collaborative group of agencies is working to develop the St. Joseph County Vulnerable Adult Protocol. The protocol identifies

laws, and outlines human service and law enforcement roles and responsibilities in protecting vulnerable adults. This group includes:

- Branch-St. Joseph Area Agency on Aging
- St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office
- Department of Human Services
- Community Mental Health of St. Joseph County
- St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department
- St. Joseph County Commission on Aging
- Human Services Commission
- Long Term Care Ombudsman
- St. Joseph County Probate Court
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services

The U.S. Department of Justice defines elder abuse as intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a trust relationship to the elder. It can also be the failure of a caregiver to satisfy the elder's basic needs or to protect the elder from harm. Financial exploitation of the elderly is included, as well.

The training was conducted by Elder Law of Michigan and made possible by a grant from the Office of Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice.

To find out more information about the Branch-St. Joseph Area Agency on Aging, its programs and services, go to the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency's website: <http://www.bhsj.org> and click Area Agency on Aging link.

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