



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Jason Brame (jasonb@communityadvocates.net); (414) 270-2951

RACINE DRUG COURT JUDGE PTACEK TO HEADLINE EXPERT PANEL DURING MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTION SYMPOSIUM, JUNE 29 IN RACINE

Symposium at Gateway Technical College to Include Sen. Wirsch, Rep. Mason, Rep. Pasch

Milwaukee (June 21, 2010)—Racine County Circuit Court Judge Gerald Ptacek, head of Racine County's drug court program, will headline a panel of leading mental health and substance use disorder experts from southeastern Wisconsin to discuss the major statewide policy changes needed to improve treatment in the state during a free symposium, June 29 in Racine.

Ptacek has presided over the grant-funded drug court, one of 20 across Wisconsin, since its inception in 2006. He will join Sen. Robert Wirsch (D-Pleasant Prairie), Rep. Cory Mason (D-Racine) and Rep. Sandy Pasch (D-Whitefish Bay) to discuss the changes that can be made to state laws, budgets, rules and regulations, and standards to increase access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

Issues include the quantity, cultural competency and location of treatment providers; strategies to reduce stigma; the adequacy of public and private funding sources; and the ability of non-medical providers to administer treatment.

Making Parity Real: Southeastern Wisconsin will be held in Racine from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 29 at the Gateway Technical College Conference Center (1001 S. Main St., Racine). Attendance is free but registration is required by Thursday, June 24. For more information and to register visit www.MakingParityReal.org.

Other panelists include:

- **Patrick Bohon**, Chair of the Legislative Advocacy Committee, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Racine.
- **Julie Hueller**, Southeastern Wisconsin Administrative Director, Mental Health and Addiction Care, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare.
- **Sue Panger**, MA, LMFT, LCSW, a Kenosha-area psychotherapist, and owner and operator of Sue Panger & Associates, SC, a mental health clinic.

—more—

Making Parity Real / Add One

The public is encouraged to attend the symposium and share their views on how to improve mental health and substance use disorder treatment coverage, access and outcomes.

“The premise of Making Parity Real is to learn from the providers, advocates and specialists that work in the treatment delivery system what problems must be rectified in order to ensure that appropriate treatment is fully available in appropriate locations in an appropriate amount of time,” said David R. Riemer, director of the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute. “Based on information learned at this symposium and similar symposia in other locations statewide, the Public Policy Institute plans to present state lawmakers and policymakers with recommendations to close Wisconsin’s treatment gaps.”

Making Parity Real will also feature updates on the *Wisconsin Parity Act* (2009 Wisconsin Act 218), which will require group health plans typically purchased by Wisconsin’s smaller employers (those with 50 or fewer employees) to provide mental health and substance use disorder benefit coverage at parity levels—equal to the treatment provided for physical conditions. This landmark law could affect 1.4 million adults and children in Wisconsin who have some form of mental illness, as well as 403,000 Wisconsinites who have substance use disorders not offered coverage by the federal *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008* (P.L. 110-343).

Making Parity Real is a statewide series of symposia to be held in locations throughout Wisconsin; symposia have been held in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Wausau, Janesville and La Crosse. Each Making Parity Real symposium features local experts discussing the role state public policy can play to improve mental health and substance use disorder treatment in Wisconsin.

Making Parity Real is sponsored by the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute, the Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative, the Grassroots Empowerment Project, Disability Rights-Wisconsin and the National Alliance on Mental Illness-Wisconsin.

The Community Advocates Public Policy Institute has a clear and simple goal: To explain why so many Milwaukeeans are poor, and to develop and implement a practical strategy to greatly reduce the level of poverty in our community and offer the poor the tools they need to lead better lives.