



\*\*\*\* NEWS RELEASE \*\*\*\*

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**Governor Rell Recognizes Office of the Healthcare Advocate Director of Consumer Relations with Governor's Service Award**

*Agency saves over \$11 million for healthcare consumers since 2002*

(Hartford, CT) - Kevin Lembo, *State Healthcare Advocate*, announced the presentation of the Governor's Service Award to the Office of the Healthcare Advocate's (OHA's) Director of Consumer Relations, Ms. Maureen Smith of Middletown. The Governor's Service Award program was established to reinforce the importance of quality customer service by recognizing the achievements and successes of state employees.

"It's an honor to have received this recognition for doing a job that I love dearly," Maureen Smith said. "I have been advocating for people for the last 7 years, helping them resolve issues that they found overwhelming. My goal is always to reach consistent, positive resolutions for families once I intercede on their behalf."

In June 2007, Ms. Smith assisted the family of a 39-year old father of two who suffered a stroke and the family's healthcare options became very limited. It was recommended to the family that the patient be placed in permanent convalescent care. However, just as all seemed lost, they called the Office of the Healthcare Advocate. Maureen Smith quickly became a part of the family's support system and their personal healthcare advocate.

Ms. Smith's nominator wrote, "It is impossible to imagine how our family would have endured this ordeal without her help and assistance... She is truly an asset to state government and an exemplary role model in her profession. Connecticut citizens are very fortunate to have OHA as a resource ..."

Maureen secured four months of intensive medical and rehabilitation services and as a result, the father's condition has continued to improve. He has made major strides and is able to live at home with his loved ones, to be involved in his community, and to make progress toward his goal of returning to work. With the assistance of Ms. Smith and OHA, this one family accessed over \$500,000 in necessary medical services they would otherwise have been denied, and the family would have been permanently separated by this illness.

State Healthcare Advocate Kevin Lembo stated, "Maureen represents the epitome of service to her community through her compassionate care and expert knowledge of the state's managed care systems and their impact on Connecticut families. Her award is testament to her tireless work in support of consumers."

The Office of the Healthcare Advocate, an independent state agency, assists consumers with health insurance issues. In 2007, OHA assisted almost 2,000 citizens and generated \$4.4 million in consumer savings. To date, in 2008, OHA has helped to reverse more than \$2 million in healthcare claims in favor of the consumer. Created by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1999, OHA is a national model of independent health insurance advocacy within state government. For more on OHA, go to [www.ct.gov/oha](http://www.ct.gov/oha)

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