

Award: Harry J. Baker Community Service Award
Recipient: Champaign County Sheriff's Office / Chief Deputy Allen Jones
Presenter: Claudia Lennhoff

Now I will ask Chief Deputy Allen Jones to join me on stage for the next presentation of the Harry J. Baker Community Service Award.

Again, the Harry J. Baker Award honors community members or organizations whose dedication and work toward improving the lives of people in our community exemplifies community service of the highest level.

I am very proud to be able to present this award this evening to the Champaign County Sheriff's Office and to Chief Deputy Allen Jones. In my 18 years of working for Health Care Consumers, it never occurred to me that there would be a time that the Sheriff's Office would be a major force and a partner in helping to address the health care needs of vulnerable community members. But thanks to the leadership of Sheriff Dan Walsh and Chief Deputy Allen Jones, that is exactly what we are celebrating with this award tonight.

In my previous award presentation, I made reference to Community Elements working with the Sheriff's Office in order to be able to provide mental and behavioral health services in our county jails to criminal justice involved individuals.

Again, this may seem like a sort of obvious thing to do, but it is no small feat to accomplish, and it is just the beginning of the new approach that the Sheriff's Office is leading.

The Sheriff's Office is embracing and helping to lead a community health approach to criminal justice and mental health, rather than sticking to a strictly traditional public safety approach. This requires leadership and vision, a willingness to take the path less traveled and to do something out of the ordinary. It requires the willingness to learn, to collaborate and coordinate, to be patient and respectful of other organizations and their processes as you try to align resources and implement new programs. It

requires a change in organizational culture and sense of organizational responsibility. And it requires a desire and commitment to help meet the often very daunting needs of our most vulnerable community members.

We are fortunate to have this kind of leadership from the Sheriff and Chief Deputy Allen Jones.

The Sheriff's Office has been very concerned and struggling with the large number of individuals with mental health, substance use, and physical health needs in our jail system.

As many of you know, individuals with mental health and substance use disorders are overrepresented in our criminal justice system – in our jails and in our prisons.

Building a system to deliver mental health services to criminal justice involved individuals who have mental illness and substance use disorders is challenging, to say the least.

To that end, the Sheriff's Office, along with Community Elements, has been helping to lead a collaboration with local government entities such as the Mental Health Board and many community organizations to help build this system. Fortunately, the Mental Health Board has prioritized some funding for this population, and the work is underway.

But the Sheriff and Allen Jones want to do more than ensure the delivery of mental health services to criminal justice involved individuals with mental illness – they want build an innovative community-based jail diversion model for people with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Creating a successful jail diversion program in our community will require unprecedented community partnerships and collaborations, and it requires strong and principled leadership, as well as humility and finesse.

I have every confidence that Chief Deputy Allen Jones has what it takes to help lead this effort.

I want to say a few words about Allen Jones, since he is the person I've primarily worked with.

My experience is that in a very short amount of time, Allen has already made great strides – he has reached out to a number of organizations, including Health Care Consumers, and he has won our trust and our cooperation, not just with his charming personality, but with his humility, willingness to learn and to ask for help, and his ability to get things done.

Allen has not only helped mobilize community organizations and local government, but he has worked whatever magic was needed internally to make sure that the Sheriff's Office systems and staff at the jails were prepared to receive the outside workers who are now providing services on site in the jails.

Our community is so fortunate to have the leadership we have in Allen Jones. He will help us make great strides in building a healthier and safer community, and I am confident that with his leadership, we have the ability to build a successful and much needed jail diversion program here in Champaign County.

Allen, on behalf of Champaign County Health Care Consumers, I want to say that it is both a privilege and a pleasure to work with you, and I am pleased to present the Harry J. Baker Community Service Award to the Sheriff's Office and to you.

We expect great things from you. Thank you!