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life's waiting

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Press Release

Longtime behavioral health advocate Abate accepts policy watchdog role at Rosecrance

Mary Ann Abate brings 36 years of experience to new position

ROCKFORD – Mary Ann Abate of Rosecrance has accepted a new role in the organization that will utilize her deep understanding of substance use and mental health disorders and allow her to influence how the changing landscape of public policy will impact behavioral healthcare in the future.

Abate will become Vice President of Public Policy for Rosecrance effective Feb. 3, 2014. She currently serves as VP for Community Mental Health.

Rosecrance President/CEO Philip W. Eaton said the role is critical going forward because of the evolving arena of public policy, which includes implementation of the Affordable Care Act. It's still unclear what impact the ACA will have on behavioral health services and access to care.

"We have many challenges and opportunities before us as we look to further our mission, strengthen our programs and influence the many decisions which will shape and mold healthcare for years to come," Eaton said.

"Behavioral healthcare is part of the overall mix, and our industry needs strong advocates like Mary Ann Abate to help inform the discussion and shape the policies that emerge from it."

Eaton noted that Abate brings 36 years of leadership in mental health services to her new role. She has led the mental health division for Rosecrance since the merger with Janet Wattles Center in 2011, and she was an executive at Janet Wattles directing day-to-day operations prior to that.

"She has led our organization in the creation and implementation of many innovative best practices and initiatives addressing the needs of individuals who live with serious mental illness," Eaton said.

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Abate said she welcomes the challenge of her new role.

“This presents a broad platform through which I can champion issues that are important to people who seek help for mental health and substance use disorders,” she said. “In a public policy forum, I have the opportunity to impact support for important programs and services far beyond the walls of Rosecrance.”

As she changes roles, Abate will assist in the leadership transition at the Rosecrance Ware Center, 526 W. State St. in Rockford, which serves adults needing mental health services. She also will continue to serve on the Steering Committee as Rosecrance designs space and makes plans to move the Ware Center to a new, larger location at 2704 N. Main St. by the end of the year.

Abate is a licensed Illinois social worker who obtained her master’s degree in community mental health from Southern New Hampshire University. She began at the Janet Wattles Center in 1982 and rose to the role of director. She has long been active in community service organizations, including Easter Seals Children’s Development Center, Junior League and Source.

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About Rosecrance

Rosecrance is a private not-for-profit organization offering behavioral health services for more than 14,000 children, teens, adults and families each year. Rosecrance provides addiction treatment through inpatient and outpatient programs in Rockford, IL, and services at six satellite offices in Chicagoland. Rosecrance also has offices in Boone and McHenry counties in Illinois and in Waukesha County, WI. The organization was founded in 1916. (More information at rosecrance.org.)

