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Local Youth Advocate Recognized with Emerging Social Work Leader Award

Arlington Heights, IL— For generations, the social work profession has worked to strengthen the well-being and meet the basic needs of all people, especially people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. In continuation of this year’s National Professional Social Work Month theme, “Generations Strong,” the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL) is honoring the work of some exceptional Illinois social workers and individuals of every generation, whose work promotes social justice and social change with and on behalf of the people and clients they serve.

One such exemplary Illinois social worker being honored this year is 2020 NASW-Illinois Chapter Statewide Emerging Leader Awardee Carina Santa Maria. **Carina Santa Maria** (*MSW, Dominican University; LCSW*) is executive director of Shelter Inc., which provides community-based, emergency, and longer-term housing for children and adolescents who are abused, neglected, dependent, or in need of supervision. She received her master’s degree in social work from Dominican University where she is also an adjunct instructor. Throughout her career, Carina has had a passion for working with youth involved with commercial sexual exploitation, working within the child welfare field for over 10 years.

In support of her nomination of Carina, Shelter Inc., Board President Leslie Carlson wrote: “With the constant state budget challenges, child welfare regulations, COA requirements, evolving donor expectations, and highest volume of social service need, Carina pushes through and drives her team with passion and pride to help kids in need.... I can’t say enough about this amazing woman who transformed an agency and is now making even greater impact for our community and well beyond.”

Fellow colleague Sheila Yousuf-Abramson, LCSW, also wrote: “[Carina] is a born leader. I have never met another person with so much passion, professionalism, integrity and genuine care and concern for those around her.... I am so proud of all that she has accomplished and know that she will continue to be a proven leader in the field of social work, inspiring others and changing lives.”

The NASW-Illinois Chapter is proud of the work of Carina H. Santa Maria and others like her who fight every day for the underserved and underprivileged in Illinois. Carina is one of four individuals being honored as this year’s NASW-Illinois Chapter Statewide Awardees. To learn more about the other statewide awardees, please visit the NASW-Illinois Chapter website (www.naswil.org) or contact Joel L. Rubin, executive director, at jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with over 120,000 members. The NASW-Illinois Chapter is one of the association’s largest chapters with over 5,000 members in Illinois alone. NASW strives to advance social work careers, grow social work businesses, and protect the profession.