Paul Bridgewater
Paul Bridgewater is President & CEO of the Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA). He has spent the last 32 years of his career advocating for seniors, caregivers and other vulnerable citizens. In 1980 he was placed at DAAA where he met Mr. Sheldon Tappes, a chairman of the Board of Directors and a leader of Detroit's labor movement. In him, Paul Bridgewater found an important role model. "When I look back over the labor movement, I understand how it helped to move the middle class forward," he says. "It also created a new discussion about retirement – and assuring that the older population had resources to see them through life."

Under Mr. Bridgewater's direction, DAAA has established one of the largest Meals on Wheels programs in the country, feeding almost 4,000 daily. In addition, the Holiday Meals on Wheels program (that is primarily supported through corporate, private, and community funds and donations) feeds 5,700 homebound seniors. DAAA's Nursing Facility Transition Services and the Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program have received top recognition in the state for its accomplishments. He has also been at the forefront of system change in the aging services, long term care and nursing home industries.

Important and groundbreaking research was released in 2003, commissioned by DAAA entitled *Dying Before Their Time*, documents the health disparities among Detroit's elderly, and has brought DAAA international recognition. The research was conducted by Wayne State University and was spearheaded by Mr. Bridgewater in order to advance government reform in health and long-term care. This award
-winning research has been recently updated in 2011 and has found that Detoirt area older adults approaching their golden years in the 50-59 age group continue to die at a 131% higher rate than other cohorts in the remainder of the state. Those 60-74 are dying at 60% higher rate than other peers in the state.

"The DAAA is an important resource for our community as well as a convener and leader in many critical partnerships that improve the lives and well-being of our citizens," he says.

The Honorable Edward Sosnick
Time in the courtroom shaped Judge Sosnick's professional outlook, but it was while serving as his mother's primary caretaker during her early stages of dementia that he gained a unique perspective into the crimes against the elderly. "People don't understand elder abuse until they are faced with it or someone makes them aware of the neglect that seniors endure," he says. As a result, Judge Sosnick amended the Sixth Circuit Court system, addressing everything from access to the courts -- to representation; he directed the Court to remove obstacles that hindered fair access for seniors.

It wasn't his only gift to an aging population.

In addition, he became the passionate co-chair of the program Serving Adults who are Vulnerable and Elderly (SAVE), and out of this endeavor grew a communitywide taskforce to

bridge police, social workers, and others providing senior care. It created an integrated network of resources that could be accessed immediately when police were notified that a senior was at risk. This Oakland County taskforce is one of the first of its kind in the country, modeled after a successful domestic violence program.

Later this year, Judge Sosnick will retire during his fourth term with the Sixth Circuit. He is a recipient of many honors from the legal community including the State Bar of Michigan's Champion of Justice Award. He is looking forward to bringing the same dedication that he has shown throughout his career to the children of divorce and domestic violence, to the seniors of Oakland County. After all, "I am in my seventies now," he says. "This makes it a lot easier to relate to the problems of aging."

Senator Tonya Schuitmaker
In November 2010, following three terms in the Michigan House of Representatives, the people of the 20th district elected Tonya Schuitmaker to serve her first term in the Michigan Senate. Senator Tonya Schuitmaker has made issues such as senior protection, the justice system, consumer protection and agriculture some of her top legislative priorities.

Senator Schuitmaker has worked diligently to promote and pass a 16 piece legislative package that gives added protection to seniors. She spearheaded bipartisan support for passage of this life saving package of bills, reinvigorating advocacy on behalf of older adults in the Michigan Legislature. "In a small town like the one I come from, this is what we do. We protect people," she says. She is from Kalamazoo and also serves Paw Paw and Antwerp Townships.

The legislative package includes protections from embezzlement, fraud, and the financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. It also addresses reporting requirements for health facilities as it pertains to abuse or the neglect of older adults.

Privately, Tonya Schuitmaker has watched dementia steal away the heart and soul of her grandmother. Like many seniors, her grandmother is still very active. Experience has taught the Senator however, that, "What patients with dementia can't always do is reason, and that puts them at risk when they are interacting in their community. Not everyone has a senior's best interest at heart. I'm living what others have had to go through," says Senator Schuitmaker. "Aging has become personal."

Thomas Trainer
Every organization has long serving individuals who give of themselves on so many levels. Thomas Trainer is such a person to Elder Law of Michigan. In his commitment, he has chaired the Board of Directors, is a donor, gives generously of his time as a teacher, taking pro bono cases and in providing advice to staff and attorneys. He also was instrumental in developing The Elder Law of Michigan Pooled Account Trust; the
Trust helps people with disabilities maintain resources to live with dignity while bringing revenue to Elder Law to fund its charitable work. He is a valuable multidimensional resource.

Tom Trainer's long career has brought excellence and expertise to the field we now call "elder law." With his early connections to Senior Citizens Legal Aid, Tom brought his commitment to justice, fairness and the passion to protect people who are vulnerable to every project, decision and presentation. His later work with the Office of Services to the Aging to implement the Michigan Emergency Pharmaceutical Program for Seniors (MEPPS) demonstrates the connection between health care, policy, access to benefits and vital roles attorneys play in these processes.

He has been active in the field of research into diseases and disorders of aging, with his earlier involvement with federal and state task forces on Alzheimer's Diseases and related conditions, and with his current involvement with Wayne State University's Institute of Gerontology.

Tom has served on the Michigan Supreme Court Task Force of Guardianship Reform, and has served the State Bar of Michigan as chair of its Senior Justice Committee and later Elder Law and Disability Rights Section, as well as its Unauthorized Practice of Law and Health Law committees. He is a frequent author, moderator and speaker for the Institute of Continuing Legal Education.

Attorney General Bill Schuette

As the State's Attorney General, Bill Schuette serves as the top law enforcement officer for Michigan residents, among them our most vulnerable seniors and those with disabilities. Currently, his office is working with residential care facilities to crack down on fraud and embezzlement that affects vulnerable residents.

Also on the Attorney General's radar are crimes referred to as "Grandparent Scams." Con artists target seniors by electronically posing as a grandchild in distress. In one instance, Michigan grandparents were taken for $33,000 when told their grandson needed money to post bond to get out of jail. The Attorney General advises grandparents to take down information and contact another family member to verify whether a grandchild is truly in distress.

When Bill Schuette was Director of Agriculture, he and his wife Cynthia created the Michigan Harvest Gathering, a food and fund drive to help feed hungry people throughout Michigan. Joining with the Food Bank Council of Michigan, the Michigan Harvest Gathering has raised more than $7.7 million and 8 million pounds of food for the Michigan families over an 18-year period. The Michigan Harvest Gathering has been recognized nationally for its innovative public-private partnership.

Bill Schuette has been a strong advocate of public safety. Earlier this year he announced legislative initiatives to put 1,000 new police officers on patrol and sentencing reforms to take repeat violent offenders off the street.