



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LIBERTY BELL AWARDS

On Wednesday, April 27, 2011, the Circuit Court of Lake County presented Liberty Bell Awards to an individual and an organization for outstanding commitment and service to the community.

The Liberty Bell Award originated in the 1960's in Michigan to honor extraordinary service to the justice system and dedication to the furtherance of the administration of justice. The Circuit Court of Lake County has bestowed the honors since 1996. In 2005, the court began its tradition of presenting the award in Memory of Judge Thomas R. Smoker, a Lake County judge who passed away in 2004. The recipients of the award are decided by a vote of the sitting Lake County circuit judges.

The Liberty Bell Awards for 2011 were presented to:

Roycealee J. Wood, the Lake County, Illinois Regional Superintendent of Schools, who is the person responsible for Lake County's 45 School Districts.

Ms. Wood was nominated for her support and commitment to activities which further the administration of justice, including her vital support of the annual Red Ribbon Rally and Law Day activities. With her support, both events contribute to good government in the community and encourage a greater respect for law and the courts. Ms. Wood has assisted the Circuit Court of Lake County on numerous occasions in e-communications to all of the superintendents and principals of Lake County schools regarding various Law Day competitions and other programs. She has lent the support of her office to the Red Ribbon Rally and been an active participant as well speaking to the students to stress the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and the criminal consequences in a positive, upbeat message.

Ms. Wood has given her guidance and assistance to several civic, charitable, military and law-related organizations. She is a member of the Lake Forest-Lake Bluff League of Women Voters, Women Interested in Government Service (WINGS), the Rotary Club of Waukegan, A Safe Place (Advisory Board), NICASA, a member of the Navy League of the U.S. for 30 years, the Lake County Chamber of Commerce and the Lake County Partners to name just a few. The high priority Ms. Woods places on civic responsibility is evident to all she works with in these organizations.

Ms. Wood has served in the North Chicago Public School District at all levels. She was elected as Regional Superintendent of Schools for Lake County, Illinois and assumed that position on July 1, 2003. Her work with parents, students, educators and community leaders to promote a better understanding of the rule of law and respect for the court system has increased awareness of a sense of civic responsibility throughout the Lake County community and makes her a deserving recipient for the 2011 Liberty Bell Award.

The Mothers Trust Foundation, is a non-profit organization that provides emergency funding to children in need in Lake County. Their goal is to assist children in trouble or crisis, raise awareness of children's needs, link needs with community resources and provide opportunities for volunteers to be involved.

The Foundation relies primarily on a large pool of active and energetic volunteers who donate their time and talents to the organization. From reviewing requests for grants to planning and hosting fundraisers and educating the public about the Foundation, the volunteers provide the necessary help with the day-to-day operation of the organization. Every week requests are reviewed for help from social workers, court officers and school counselors who work with children in difficulty.

Through its funding, the Foundation provides emergency assistance for the least fortunate children when no one else can. Mothers Trust has been particularly helpful to wards of the Juvenile Court by providing its niche funding for needs not met by traditional sources. Grants from the Foundation have provided enrichment and the semblance of a normal life by way of the offering the opportunity for summer camp, prom clothing, and music lessons to Lake County's poorest and most vulnerable citizens.

Although Mothers Trust is small in size, organizations such as Catholic Charities, Lake County Juvenile Court Services, the Lake County Health Department, and the Department of Children and Family Services rely on it to provide for needs that fall outside of the goals and mandates of these organizations.

Former social worker Barbara Monsor founded the Mothers Trust Foundation in 1998. Though Barbara retired as acting director of the Foundation in 2008, she remains an active member of the Board of Directors. Mrs. Monsor is the mother of six and grandmother of eight.

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