



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
Lake County
Waukegan, Illinois 60085-4359

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Point of Contact: Robert A. Zastany
Joseph Svoboda
Telephone: 847.377.3600
847.377.3823

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LAW MERIT BADGE DAY

The quietness that usually reigns over the courthouse on weekends ended early on Saturday morning when approximately 60 Boy Scouts entered the building to take part in the annual Law Merit Badge Day program. The program is a collaborative effort with the support of Chief Judge James Booras, Sheriff Mark Curran, Coroner Dr. Richard Keller, and the College of Lake County in conjunction with the Boy Scouts of America, Northeast Illinois Council. Sixty Scouts attended the one day event who represented Potawatomi, North Star and Aptakistic Districts of Lake County; Blackhawk District of McHenry County; Signal Hill District of Palatine; Twin Lakes of Des Plaines; Nishnabec District of Calumet; and Old Capital District of Iowa City.

The day began at 8:30 a.m. with a welcome and introduction of the Law Merit Badge Day program given by Robert Zastany. Zastany, whose full-time day position is Executive Director of the Administrative Office of the 19th Judicial Circuit, is a recipient of the prestigious Silver Beaver Scout Award.

The 60 young men were equally divided into three groups so that each group got to visit the coroner's facility and talk with Deputy Coroner Orlando Portillo and tour the Lake County Jail with Rick Riddle of the Sheriff's Department. They also were given a courthouse tour escorted by Rob Zastany, Jr., a probation officer; Joseph Svoboda, the 19th Circuit's webmaster; and Robert Kocanda, a judicial information specialist. After the groups reunited, Svoboda, a Law merit badge counselor, gave an overview of the requirements that need to be completed to earn the Law Merit Badge. The morning's end session was led by Judge George Bridges who introduced the attendees to the differences between civil and criminal laws; the origin of law; the development of the jury system; the Justinian Code and Magna Carta; and famous trials in history.

After lunch, Judge David Brodsky addressed issues including indigent legal assistance, copyrights, and internet piracy. This led into mid-afternoon activities whereby Judge Brian Hughes informed the Scouts that they were going to participate as members of a

jury in a mock trial. The presented case involved the snatching of a briefcase that contained \$5,000 in cash from a person who was at the courthouse to pay taxes on his farm. After short deliberation, the jury found the defendant "not guilty." Trial participants included Marc Bangser, assistant state's attorney, as the prosecuting attorney; Fred Day, assistant state's attorney, as defense attorney; Mark Belokon, attorney, as the victim; Rob Zastany, Jr., probation officer, as defendant; Sgt. Michael Gregory, of the Sheriff's Office, as court officer; Christopher Gregory, son of Sgt. Gregory, as the eyewitness; deputy Brett Ligenza of the Sheriff's Office, as arresting officer; and Lauren DeBoer, court reporter. The performers then discussed various career opportunities in law enforcement. Judge Hughes provided information about required education and how one acquires a law degree; the requirements to become a judge and how judges are selected.

In closing, each Scout was presented with a Law Merit Badge and issued a certificate of completion. Since the event began in 1998, over 450 Scouts have registered and completed the program successfully.

Anyone interested in future participation or who would like more information about the Law Merit Badge program may send an email to Courts@lakecountyil.gov.

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<http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us>