



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
Lake County
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LIBERTY BELL AWARDS

On Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 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 presentation took place during the Lake County Bar Association luncheon meeting held at the Greenbelt Cultural Center in North Chicago.

Originated in Michigan in the '60's, the Liberty Bell Award is given to honor those who represent extraordinary service to the justice system and dedication to the furtherance of the administration of justice. These awards have been presented by the Circuit Court of Lake County 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 2012 were presented to:

Anthony (Tony) Gordon, is the Legal Affairs writer for the Daily Herald newspaper covering Lake County. Tony is a graduate of Southern Illinois University with a BS in Journalism. He began his reporting career at the Evansville Press in Evansville, IN in 1983. In 1985 he took a position with the Waukegan News-Sun and, except for a four month period in 1987, he worked for the News-Sun until the fall of 1994. In October 1994, Tony joined the Daily Herald staff and has written voluminous articles during his 18 years with the newspaper.

Tony has been an ever-faithful news reporter of court cases and happenings for over 25 years. In fact, the only times spent away from the courthouse is an occasional few days at a NASCAR racing event, a pastime that Tony thoroughly enjoys outside of work. "Over the years, Tony has been a true friend of the Court," said Judge Christopher Starck. "He was never one to walk away from a tough story or to speak his mind. He would report the news but never was one who tried to make the news. He respected the Court and treated it with kindness and with respect."

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Chief Judge Victoria Rossetti said, "It is a great pleasure to work with Tony and to bestow this honor. Tony is a man of honor and conviction who has earned the confidence of his

readers and the judicial system. He embodies the profession of journalism.”

The Guardianship Help Desk and its Representative Volunteers Elizabeth Rochford, Francis Osburn, Sr., and Anna Higgins

The guardianship help desk provides assistance to pro se (self represented) petitioners in filling out necessary paperwork for guardianship and helps them understand the court process. The project began with discussions among Circuit Judge Valerie Boettle Ceckowski and Lake County Bar Association members, attorneys Elizabeth Rochford and Tom Pasquesi. Current probate judge, Circuit Judge Diane Winter, helped set up the program.

The help desk is staffed by Lake County Bar Association attorney volunteers and non-attorney associate members who have been trained as paralegals at the College of Lake County.

Attorney Elizabeth Rochford (29) and paralegals Francis Osburn, Sr. (36) and Anna Higgins (27) are being honored for their volunteerism and for their continued support of the program. The numbers behind their names indicate the number of times they volunteered in 2011. Volunteers donate their time and knowledge to the community out of a sense of civic responsibility and desire to help others with their skills. Their assistance allows the probate court to function more efficiently, to receive more accurate information and to afford each litigant the opportunity to be heard in a dignified, respectful manner. These volunteers have promoted a better understanding of the rule of law, encouraged respect for law and the courts, and have contributed to good government in the community.

Chief Judge Rossetti offered this comment: “This program and these respected professionals have helped the court and the public immeasurably with their service. They are very worthy recipients of the Liberty Bell Award.”

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