



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
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LAKE COUNTY JUDGES WIN AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN UNITED WAY OF LAKE COUNTY LITERACY CHALLENGE

This summer, Lake County judges teamed up with United Way of Lake County to take the pledge to help children learn to read at grade level by the end of third grade as part of this year's Page it Forward literacy drive. The judges, led by Lake County resident and Illinois Appellate Court Judge, Justice Mary Schostok, took second place in the **Page it Forward – TEAM GARZA Corporate Challenge** where Lake County businesses competed in a friendly competition to recruit the most reading volunteers - based on their percentage of employees. Several teams competed for the coveted travelling trophies and a full year of bragging rights. In Lake County, 44% of all the judges took the pledge and teamed up with United Way to change the story and help students read at grade level and graduate on time. The awards were presented at the United Way of Lake County's Leadership Breakfast in October at Independence Grove.

As the President of the Illinois Judges Association, Justice Schostok is taking on the cause of childhood literacy and encouraging her fellow judges throughout the entire state to get on board to help children learn to read. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 74% of 3rd graders in the U.S. cannot read at grade level and are likely to drop out of school. Prison population estimates are often based on third grade reading scores and graduation rates.

"Every day for the past 15 years in my courtroom I have seen first-hand how lives have been impacted by not being able to read at an early age. If you can't read at grade level by the end of third grade, you won't be able to keep up with school and you'll be left behind, get frustrated and drop out" Schostok said. "I believe if we can intervene for children at an early age, they will have a significantly higher chance of success in life and will not have to turn to a life of crime to support themselves. As judges, we want to see less people in our courtrooms and we want to be part of the solution."

"We know that helping kids read at grade level in elementary school has a tremendous, positive impact on the rest of their lives. Serving as a reader, tutor or mentor can change the course of a child's life," said Kristi Long, CEO and President of United Way of Lake County. "And who understands the long-term effect of children who can't read and end up dropping out of school better than judges?"

To learn more about the Lake County judges literacy program, visit www.liveunitedlakecounty.org/lcjudges.

To take the pledge to volunteer reader, mentor or tutor, visit www.pageitforward.org.

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(Photo below)



Pictured (left to right): Judge James Simonian; Judge Joseph Waldeck; Judge Diane Winter; Judge Luis Berrones; Chief Judge Fred Foreman; Judge Nancy Waites; (center-travelling trophy); Judge Elizabeth Rochford; Judge Valerie Ceckowski; Judge Michael Betar; Judge Mitchell Hoffman; and Judge Helen Rosenberg.