



News Release

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

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LIBERTY BELL AWARDS

Chief Judge John T. Phillips is pleased to announce that the 2015 Liberty Bell Awards will be presented to Rita Pennington (individual award) and to the Affordable Housing Corporation of Lake County (organization award).

This year's Liberty Bell Individual Award will be bestowed by the 19th Judicial Circuit upon Mrs. **Rita Pennington**, who started the Land of Lincoln Quilts of Valor [QOV] program in 2004. Mrs. Pennington through her work with QOV has graciously presented over 20 quilts to 19th Judicial Circuit Veterans Treatment and Assistance Court graduates and guests. In addition, she has tirelessly donated her time and has organized monthly sew-ins and Quilts of Valor presentations for veterans statewide, including the gift of numerous quilts to returning military personnel at Great Lakes Naval Base in North Chicago. Rita Pennington has passionately devoted herself to honoring returning veterans and to the enhancement of the court's Veterans Treatment and Assistance Court since its beginning. The presentation of the quilts during the graduation ceremony is always a poignant moment for the vets and all who witness it. Mrs. Pennington's commitment demonstrates her outstanding sense of civic responsibility and her generous dedication to our veterans and our community.

The 2015 Liberty Bell Organizational Award has been granted to the **Affordable Housing Corporation of Lake County** [AHCLC]. AHCLC is a HUD Certified Housing Counseling Agency that provides free and reliable housing counseling to homeowners in foreclosure. AHCLC has been indispensable in assisting distressed homeowners who are

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seeking to modify their mortgage loans in order to keep their homes. While AHCLC provided this assistance throughout the duration of the mortgage foreclosure crisis, more recently AHCLC has been instrumental in helping to establish and operate the 19th Judicial Circuit Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program, where each homeowner participates in housing counseling as a pre-requisite to mediation. Lisa Pugliese, the Executive Director of AHCLC, and all of its staff have worked tirelessly to strengthen counseling services for homeowners in Lake County, and to develop, implement and improve the Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program. AHCLC is so effective in this role that the 19th Judicial Circuit's program has seen a success rate above 75%, and many homeowners receive loan modifications from their banks before the case ever advances to an actual mediation session.

Originated in Michigan in the '60's, the Liberty Bell Award is given to individuals and/or organizations for their outstanding service and for their dedication to further the administration of justice. The criteria is broad but generally recognizes those who have promoted a better understanding of the rule of law; encouraged a greater respect for law and the courts; stimulated a sense of civic responsibility; and contributed to good government in the community. These awards have been presented by the Circuit Court of Lake County since 1996. The recipients of the award are selected by a vote of the sitting circuit judges of Lake County.

The 2015 Liberty Bell Awards will be presented at the Lake County Bar Association meeting at Waukegan City Hall at 12:15 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28, 2015.

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Press is invited.

www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us