



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

As part of the 19th Judicial Circuit's celebration of Law Day U.S.A., the Circuit will bestow Liberty Bell Awards in Memory of Judge Thomas R. Smoker, a judge in Lake County who passed away in 2004. The honorees will be acknowledged at a meeting of the Lake County Bar Association to be held on Wednesday, April 24, 2013.

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 Liberty Bell Awards for 2013 will be presented to:

Janice (Jan) Heikkila has been a volunteer with the Lake County Probation Volunteer Program (LCPVP) since its inception in August 1974. She started out as a member of the C.A.P. (Citizens Assistance Program) Board and over the years has participated in many volunteer roles within the LCPVP. For the past ten years, she has been a mentor to clients involved in the Field Group Reporting and DUI Group Reporting Programs at adult probation. Jan meets with the clients once a month in their regularly scheduled group and discusses their court ordered conditions, to ensure they complete them successfully.

Jan is retired and keeps herself busy with several other volunteer commitments in the community, including COOL Food Pantry. She is a long-time Waukegan resident, enjoys traveling and spending time with friends and family.

Bruce Skipper also has been a volunteer with the Lake County Probation Volunteer Program since its inception in August 1974, and he has volunteered at both adult and juvenile probation. Bruce has been specifically involved in the Field Group Reporting and DUI Group Reporting Programs at adult probation for the past ten years. He, too, meets with clients once a month in their regularly scheduled group to discuss their court ordered conditions, to ensure successful achievement.

Bruce is retired from the Lake County Sheriff's Department. He has been involved in many other volunteer organizations over the years including Waukegan Jaycees, State's Attorney's Citizen's

Advisory Committee and Vice President of the Adult Probation Board of Directors. He is a long-time resident of Waukegan and enjoys traveling all around the world and is willing to share amazing stories about his world travels.

Bruce and Jan still report to volunteer together every month. They are the lead volunteers on a team of four and are superior examples of what a probation volunteer should be. They take tremendous pride in their volunteer work and have a vested interest in the clients and their well-being. The Lake County Probation Volunteer Program feels privileged to have them continue their involvement in the program.

Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center of Gurnee (“ZCenter”) whose mission is to provide a place where survivors of sexual assault and abuse can heal and mobilize the community toward action to end sexual violence. Their philosophy is to provide quality, comprehensive, and client-centered services to survivors of sexual assault and abuse. They believe that women, men and children are entitled to accessible services, privacy, empowerment and advocacy. Their services are free and available to all survivors regardless of race, gender, language, ability, sexual orientation, or religion.

ZCenter is the former LaCASA (Lake County Council Against Sexual Assault) which was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1983. The LaCASA name change took place in 2008 after Highland Park businessman and entrepreneur Richard Zacharias. (Mr. Zacharias is also known as the financial backer who made the “Dove Bar” a national brand.) In 2013, LaCASA/ZCenter will celebrate its 30th anniversary.

Below are some of the services offered by ZCenter:

counseling to survivors of all ages in English and Spanish provided by professional staff;
a crisis hotline available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year;
a children’s program that will help a victim become a survivor and help them learn to trust and how to be safe;
a parent support group;
trained volunteers available to listen and offer support; and
a professional training program to educate on how to give compassionate and sensitive support to victims of sexual violence.

ZCenter has grown from a volunteer-based organization to a multifaceted agency comprised of a Board of Directors, professional staff, and trained volunteers. Its constantly growing services also include 24-hour medical and legal advocacy, individual and group counseling for survivors and their loved ones, training of professionals who work with victims (i.e., police, emergency room personnel, and court services staff), Child Assault Prevention (CAP) program in both Spanish and English throughout the Lake County school system, and community education which includes sexual assault awareness, risk reduction, and information on incest. Services and outreach have been expanded to the Spanish-speaking community with bicultural and bilingual staff members in the community education, advocacy, and clinical programs.

Today, ZCenter consists of 18 professional staff together with 150 trained volunteers. To learn more about ZCenter, you may visit its website at www.zcenter.org.

The Liberty Bell Award presentations will take place at noon on Wednesday, April 24, 2013, at Milan Banquet Hall in Waukegan.

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www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us