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FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

JUDGES OF THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT WILL VISIT LOCAL CLASSROOMS AS PART OF ILLINOIS JUDGES ASSOCIATION READING PROJECT

In conjunction with the February celebration of the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln, the judges of the Lake County Circuit Court will be among the many Illinois judges to deliver a program to grade school students based on the popular children's book by Martha Brenner, *Abe Lincoln's Hat*. To have a Judge read to the students in your Lake County classroom, email tjaffe@lakecountyil.gov.

A project of the [Illinois Judges Association](#), the reading program is aimed at children in grades K-4 to encourage the appreciation, value, and enjoyment of reading. Judges dressed in black robes will make classroom appearances, read the book, and discuss its intersection with history and the law; the book will then be donated to the school library.

"Too many school children are not reading at grade level," said Hon. Mary Schostok, a justice in the Appellate Court, Second District, and former president of the Illinois Judges Association. "This reading deficiency affects student learning and contributes to the high school dropout rate. Our reading project is one small step which we hope will inspire young students to appreciate the value of books as they learn a little about history and our system of justice directly from a sitting judge."

Surveys by the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) have found that a significant percentage of fourth-graders from low-income families are not reading at grade level. Further, children who are proficient readers by the end of third grade have a greater chance to graduate from high school and become economically self-sufficient adults.

Abe Lincoln's Hat is an illustrated account of the adventures of our nation's 16th President. It reveals the secrets he stored in his tall, black hat. The book portrays Lincoln as an absent-minded frontier lawyer who nudged his memory by sticking letters, court notes, contracts, and even his checkbook inside his trademark top hat.

The project is the latest in a series of community programs undertaken by the Illinois Judges Association, including the IJA's Page It Forward reading and tutoring program. Other IJA programs are "Courtroom in the Classroom," a presentation that celebrates the U.S. Constitution; "7 Reasons to Leave the Party," covering the legal and personal consequences of drinking and driving, taking drugs, and engaging in other unhealthy behaviors; "Worries of the World Wide Web," a program created to address the increasing problem of cyberbullying, electronic harassment, and sexting/pornography and "Your Future, Your Choice," educate the students about the justice system, how a case goes through the system, what's the difference between the juvenile and the adult system and what are the crimes

associated with the internet and social media. Information on various IJA programs is available on their website: <https://ija.memberclicks.net/in-school-programs>.

The [Illinois Judges Association](#) is a membership organization of 1,250 active and retired judges whose purpose is to foster public confidence in the independence of the judiciary, provide services and education to its members, and information about court operations to the public. Funding for the books was made possible by a grant from the Illinois Judges Foundation.

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