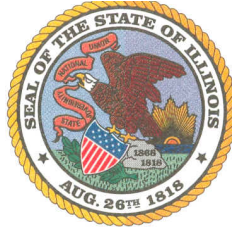


STATE OF ILLINOIS  
CIRCUIT COURT  
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

JOHN S. LOWRY  
Chief Judge



WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
400 WEST STATE STREET, SUITE 215  
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61101  
PHONE (815) 319-4806

April 14, 2022

**For Immediate Release**

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Family Violence Coordinating Council Hosts  
“Hands Around the Courthouse” Community Awareness Event**

**ROCKFORD, IL** – April is Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month. Judge Jennifer Clifford, Chairperson of the 17th Judicial Circuit Court Family Violence Coordinating Council (FVCC), announces the return of “Hands Around the Courthouse” on April 21, 2022 at 12:00pm at the front entrance of the Winnebago County Criminal Justice Center located at 650 W. State St. in Rockford.

The community is encouraged to join the FVCC and their community partners, including Winnebago County CASA, Children’s Home and Aid, Children’s Safe Harbor and The Carrie Lynn Children’s Center at the annual event, returning following a two year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This brief ceremony will bring the community together to remember survivors and celebrate the work that has been done to improve the response to victims of child abuse and neglect.

Chief Judge John S. Lowry will lead the event which will feature a survivor testimonial. At the end of the event, participants will surround the courthouse with blue ribbon and plant a blue pinwheel garden to honor survivors of child abuse and neglect and increase awareness around prevention efforts. This event is open to the community.

According to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, over 200,000 calls to the Illinois Child Abuse Hotline are made each year. In 2021, over 1,400 minors were involved in the Juvenile Abuse and Neglect court system in the 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit.

Judge Clifford, Chair of the Family Violence Coordinating Council; John Papiernik, Executive Director of Winnebago County CASA; and Jillisa Bondurant, Executive Director of Children’s Safe Harbor will be available for media interviews following the event.

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