KANE STATE’S ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES TOP EMPLOYEES FOR 2014

December 9, 2014

Four employees of the Kane County State Attorney’s office have been honored for their contributions to the office, law enforcement and their community in 2014.

Assistant State’s Attorney Lori Schmidt was named Prosecutor of the Year, and administrative assistant Sherrie Robotham was named Employee of the Year. In addition, Assistant State’s Attorneys Andrew Whitfield and Amy Ballard were honored for their outstanding trial work.

Lori joined the Kane County State’s Attorney’s Office in 2003, and is assigned to the Kane County Child Advocacy Center, which prosecutes cases of sexual abuse against children. Lori has long been an advocate for children. Before attending law school, she worked for several years as a paralegal for the Public Guardian’s Office in Chicago. At the Kane County SAO, Lori worked in the Abuse & Neglect Unit and the Juvenile Delinquency Unit before she joined the CAC in 2007.

Lori is respected throughout the office, legal community, and among advocates for children for her passion for her work, as well as quality and commitment.

Lori had an abundance of courtroom successes in 2014. Among them:

- Lori secured a 45-year prison sentence for Enrique Ruiz, who preyed upon and sexually assaulted a young child he knew, and then vanished shortly before his December 2013 trial was to begin. He was convicted and sentenced in absentia.
- Lori prosecuted Regulo Castro, who pleaded guilty to predatory criminal sexual assault and was sentenced to 15 years in prison.
- Lori prosecuted Brandon Niford, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison after he was found guilty of preying upon and sexually assaulting a young child he knew.
- And she recently prosecuted Sergio Tinajero, who faces a minimum of 27 years in prison for preying on and sexually assaulting a young child he knew.

“The Child Advocacy Center attorneys have a difficult assignment in many ways. The cases tear at the fabric of families, they are complex and emotional, and most of the victims are abused by someone they should have been able to trust. Lori handles them all with great care, and she passionately advocates for each of the victims. We
are proud to have Lori on our staff, and the people of Kane County should be pleased to know that Lori is on their side,” Kane County State’s Attorney Joe McMahon said.

Lori is a native of Carol Stream and a graduate of Glenbard North High School, Illinois State University and The John Marshall Law School.

Sherrie Robotham has been with the office since 1990 and is the administrative assistant assigned to the Civil Division, which is in the old courthouse in downtown Geneva. In March 2015, Sherrie will celebrate 25 years with the Kane SAO.

Sherrie has worked in many parts of the office and is very fond of her work with the Civil Division, which represents Kane County and county officials in civil court matters. Sherrie is known among her co-workers and county officials as exceptionally cheerful, helpful and conscientious. She has a very high standard for herself and works very hard to ensure she meets that standard.

Among her duties, she serves as receptionist, typist, transcriber, and doesn’t mind answering the multitude of questions that are directed toward the Civil Division every day. She also will cheerfully change a light bulb or re-set a clock. Sherrie makes no secret about her love for her job and how much she appreciates the opportunity to serve the people of Kane County.

Sherrie lives in a rural part of Kane County and constantly notes how much she enjoys living among the open spaces with abundant flora and fauna. She also is a frequent blood donor and has been recognized by Heartland Blood Centers for her work and donations.

“Sherrie represents what you want in an employee. She cares deeply about the quality of her work, and puts in great effort to ensure it is done correctly and is error free. She considers it an honor to serve the people of Kane County, and we consider it an honor to have her here,” McMahon said.

The Ace of Spades Award, which annually recognizes courtroom excellence, was divided into two this year, with one award being given for felony trials and one for traffic and misdemeanor trials. The award is based on a number of factors, including the number of trials completed, the complexity of the trials completed, the willingness of the prosecutor to serve as co-counsel to other prosecutors in their trials, the steps taken to improve and develop new trial skills, and the way in which the prosecutor mentors and inspires other prosecutors to try cases.

Andrew Whitfield is a two-time Ace of Spaces Award winner, having also won it for 2008. Andrew took nine felony cases to trial in 2014. He currently is assigned to the Child Advocacy Center. Andrew grew up in Naperville, earned his undergraduate degree from Lewis University in Romeoville and his law degree from the Southern Illinois University School of Law in Carbondale. Andrew joined the Kane SAO in 2007.

Amy Ballard was recognized for her excellence with the Ace of Spades Award for traffic and misdemeanor trials. Amy took 110 cases to trial in 2014. Amy is a native of Chicago. She earned her undergraduate degree from Saint Xavier University in Chicago, and her law degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology’s Chicago-Kent College of Law. Amy joined the Kane SAO in 2013.