

County News

# Juvenile placements save Kane \$1.4 million

by Steve Zalusky

The Kane County Board gave Brooke Whitted a blank check, but the numbers he filled in brought smiles to Nancy Wauchope and the rest of the members of the board's Judiciary Committee.

Since Whitted, a Chicago attorney, was hired last year as a special assistant state's attorney to handle the placements of juvenile offenders, the county has saved \$1.4 million it would otherwise have spent to find homes for them.

Wauchope said that before Whitted's involvement, school districts refused to accept placements. She recalled a child who had killed a child who had killed had to be sent to an

institution in Denver, Colo.

Even though the school districts were responsible for educating the kids, "they were not contributing dime one" for their treatment.

Finally, the county contacted Whitted, who, according to Wauchope, had "a pristine reputation" working with such courts as DuPage. "We thought, 'Let's take a chance. We can't do worse than we already are.'"

One of those most instrumental in making Whitted's program a success has been Judge Richard Larson. Larson has made sure no placement is made unless it is funded either partially or in full by another entity.

"Without the support of Judge Larson, this program would not have gotten off the ground," said Mike Daly, director of juvenile court services for the 16th Judicial Circuit and superintendent of the county youth home.

In fact, according to Wauchope, one attorney once told Larson during a case, "You've got that Brooke Whitted look in your eye."

Since Whitted has been on board, Kane County school districts have funded either 66.6% or 17.7% of juvenile placements. School districts alone have saved Kane County over \$1.28 million.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has been responsible

for many other placements as well.

Whitted said one placement costing \$144,000 per year is fully funded by the Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA), and that a total of 14 placements are funded at no cost to the county.

Daly said one particular juvenile has been housed at the youth home with the help of the program.

"Because of this program, we've been able to take care of more children," Judiciary Committee member Mary Richards said.

On Sept. 1, Whitted will hand the reins over to Assistant State's Attorney Divya Sarang. As part of his

## Whitted

Continued from Page 8

Akenam's commitment to the protection of children, she was hired to work three days per week in concert with Whitted in preparation for the transition.

Wauchope said Sarang has had an interesting career. She said Sarang had practiced before the Supreme Court in New Delhi, but when she came to America, she took all over again.

In thanking the committee for the opportunity to work with the county, Whitted said, "This has been the most fun of my law practice." Whitted will continue to work with the county as a consultant.

"It is the policy of Kane County to keep these kids out of DOC (the Department of Corrections) as long as we can," Wauchope said. "Once in there, hope for that kid drops."

"We're saving more children for less money than we had in the past," Wauchope said.

3000 Dundee Rd., Suite 303  
Northbrook IL 60062  
phone 847.564.8662  
fax 847.564.8419  
www.whittedclearlylaw.com  
website

WHITTED  
+ COMPANY