

NEWS RELEASE

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INDEFATIGUABLE ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN PRISONERS HONORED WITH CHICAGO BAR ASSOCIATION'S 2013 LIBERTY BELL AWARD

CHICAGO, ILL. (April 25, 2013)— Sherrin Fitzer, Women and Family Services Administrator at the Logan Correctional Center, Lincoln, Ill. will be honored with the 2013 Liberty Bell at a reception beginning at 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 30, at the Chicago Bar Association (CBA), 321 S. Plymouth Court, Chicago. Presented each year to a non-lawyer who works in the legal system on behalf of the most disadvantaged, the Liberty Bell Award will be presented by Hon. Sharon Johnson Coleman of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois at the annual Judges Reception.

The award is presented by the Young Lawyers Section (YLS) of the CBA as part of its annual Law Week celebration. Nominations may be made by anyone and are evaluated by a panel of bar association presidents.

About Honoree Sherrin Fitzer

A former college English teacher with a passion for aiding incarcerated women and their children, Sherrin Fitzer provides the assistance female inmates at Logan Correctional Center need to build their own legal defense arguments and to assist them in staying connected to their families while in prison.

Her nominator, Alexis Mansfield, a pro bono attorney with Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers, writes, "Over the nine years she has held this post, she has assisted thousands and thousands of women access to the justice system. She has provided assistance to caretakers seeking to enroll these women's' children in school, advice on how to make

visitation possible, and helped to connect women and their families to the proper legal resources.

Mansfield says Fitzer is not content, however, to fulfill the mere conditions of her job description. “She is devoted to helping her clients become successful so they will not reoffend. Fitzer runs the inmate newspaper, teaching English and writing skills, solicits donations of clothing so the inmates can run a “boutique” within the prison that dresses women for court appearances and for re-entry into society, organizes plays, poetry readings, brings in outside resources, organizes Christmas presents for their children and a summer camp to reunite moms and kids. She also heads a re-entry summit for hundreds of women several times a year. The summit prepares the women for re-entry by familiarizing them with their legal rights and connects them with the resources available to help them.

She was recently given responsibility for all pregnant women in the Illinois Department of Corrections. She has risen to the challenge by working to connect women with legal services providers as well as helping them provide for their children in their living situations.

The women at the Logan Correction Center are clearly inspired by and trusting of Fitzer. Mansfield says she has earned their trust and respect by showing them care and concern every day.

About the Award

The Liberty Bell Award promotes the ideals of justice, liberty, and the importance of individual and community responsibility and is bestowed on honorees who have met the following qualifications:

- a) they must not be lawyers;
- b) they must have a sense of responsibility for community welfare and public duty under the law;
- c) they must help others to understand and assert their rights under the law;
- d) they must promote and encourage respect for and obedience to the law;
and
- e) they must assist the smooth functioning of our system of justice.