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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN HOSTS FORUM FOR CRIME VICTIMS

Southern Illinois Crime Victims' Rights Event Features Expert Panel

Carterville – Attorney General Lisa Madigan’s office today hosted a crime victims’ roundtable at John A. Logan College in Carterville. The event follows similar roundtables held last month to commemorate National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. This year’s theme is “Justice for Victims. Justice for All.”

At each roundtable event, crime victims and victims’ advocates have come forward to tell personal stories of their experiences as victims of crime and the challenges they have faced in the criminal justice system. Twenty individuals testified at and more than 130 attended the first roundtable held on April 14th in Chicago. On April 15th, at the Attorney General’s Office in Springfield, the panelists and 75 audience members listened to testimony from 15 central Illinois crime victims and victim advocates.

“This southern Illinois roundtable gives us an opportunity to hear real-life stories of how people’s lives have been forever changed by their experiences. As we listen to victims and experienced victim advocates, we gain new insight into how the criminal justice system can help victims to recover and how, in some instances, the system lets victims down,” Madigan said. “The information we glean from these roundtables will greatly assist my office and the victims’ services community in improving our advocacy efforts on behalf of victims.”

The panel of experts at today’s roundtable included Circuit Court Judge Kimberly Dahlen, Perry County State’s Attorney Dave Stanton, Pope County State’s Attorney Janet Proctor, Representative John Bradley of Marion, Kathy Schimpf, Executive Director of the Williamson County Child Advocacy Center, Jackson County Sheriff Robert Burns, Gail Thomas of Southern Illinois University School of Law, Senior Assistant Attorney General Richard Rybak and staff from Attorney General Madigan’s Crime Victims Services Division.

The crime victims’ roundtable events are part of Attorney General Madigan’s ongoing work on behalf of crime victims in Illinois.

Through the Crime Victims Services Division, Attorney General Madigan’s office provides financial assistance, supported through fees and fines imposed on convicted criminals, to innocent victims of violent crimes and their families to cover out-of-pocket expenses including hospital, medical, funeral and other expenses related to the crime. Domestic violence victims also can receive

financial assistance for relocation and moving expenses under a law Madigan drafted in 2005.

Last month, Attorney General Madigan's office hosted 37 crime victim advocates, criminal justice professionals and social service providers at the third Illinois Victim Assistance Academy (IVAA) on the campus of Illinois State University. The IVAA is an intensive, 40-hour training designed to improve the quality and consistency of victim services across Illinois.

In 2007, in an effort to better protect victims of stalking, the Attorney General's office presented two special training sessions for more than 150 participants, including law enforcement officers, prosecutors and investigators, court personnel and domestic violence legal advocates. The trainings offered an overview of the stalking laws, practical tips for investigations and strategies for successfully prosecuting these crimes.

Attorney General Madigan's Crime Victims' Rights Roundtable Project is one of 56 projects around the country, and the only Illinois project, that were selected out of 145 applications for funding through a grant from the federal Office of Victims of Crime (OVC).

The Attorney General's office will hold additional roundtables on June 4, 2008, at the Illinois Department of Transportation building in Collinsville and on June 11, 2008, in the City Council Chambers at the Rock Island City Hall.

Interested individuals can learn more about the services provided by Attorney General Madigan's Crime Victim Service Division by visiting www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov, or by calling 1-800-228-3368.

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