



STATE OF ILLINOIS
CIRCUIT COURT
22ND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
McHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS



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For Immediate Release

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**22nd Judicial Circuit of McHenry County Welcomes Facility Dog
to the Michael J. Sullivan Judicial Center**



WOODSTOCK, IL — The 22nd Judicial Circuit of McHenry County is pleased to announce the addition of a new facility dog, Honey, to the Michael J. Sullivan Judicial Center. Honey, a Golden Retriever was, purchased from Sunset Goldens in Villa Park, will assist in alleviating stress and promoting a calming environment within the court. Undergoing training as a certified service animal with M.A.S.T., Honey will be available throughout various offices, hallways, and courtrooms of the

Judicial Center to provide emotional support to members of the public, employees at the judicial center and attorneys.

“Honey is a very welcome addition to our court family,” says Chief Judge Michael Chmiel. “The concept arrived a few years ago, and in learning what was happening in other judicial circuits with the involvement of facility dogs, the time seemed right to move forward with our new teammate.”

This initiative reflects the growing trend of integrating facility dogs into court systems nationwide. Recognizing the often-stressful nature of court proceedings, the 22nd Judicial Circuit believes that having a facility dog present is a worthwhile endeavor to foster a more supportive and comforting atmosphere. Courts and judicial centers are often emotionally intense environments where individuals experience high levels of stress and anxiety. The research suggests that animals have

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therapeutic benefits for a variety of physical and psychological challenges and have positive effects on a wide range of psychological outcomes, including reductions in anger, anxiety, depression, and general distress. They also reduce heart rate and blood pressure. The presence of a facility dog in courtrooms has also been shown to help witnesses, particularly children and victims of trauma, feel more at ease during difficult testimonies. By providing comfort and a sense of calm, facility dogs help mitigate the emotional toll that court proceedings can have on vulnerable individuals. Additionally, their presence can lead to more clear, coherent testimonies by reducing anxiety-induced barriers to communication.

"While this is not a new idea, it is one we believe is highly beneficial for everyone involved in the judicial process," said Dan Wallis, Trial Court Administrator of the 22nd Judicial Circuit. "We are committed to making our courtrooms and judicial center a supportive environment, and we believe Honey will make a significant positive impact. She already has. Courts are a stressful place, and no one wants to come to court, so this project is meant as a way to make the court process just a little better."

For more information about the Honey and her role within the 22nd Judicial Circuit, please contact Court Administration at courtadmin@22ndcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov.

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