

## Office of the Kane County State's Attorney



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## **KANE SAO MOURNS DEATH OF DEBRA BREE, CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER DIRECTOR, 20-YEAR PROSECUTOR**

August 28, 2020

Debra Bree, executive director of the Kane County Child Advocacy Center, died Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020, after a nearly two-year battle with colon cancer.

Deb joined the Kane County State's Attorney's Office in April 2000, and spent most of her prosecutorial career working on behalf of children. She was first chair of the Juvenile Division before being named lead prosecutor of the Child Advocacy Center in January 2009. In December 2012 State's Attorney Joe McMahon named her the center's executive director.

Deb was respected by her co-workers, the legal community and the child welfare community for her experience, professionalism and leadership, as well as her commitment to the safety and well-being of children. Deb fiercely defended each child survivor as if the child was her own, always focused on justice and the best possible outcome.

Deb grew up in Lincoln, Ill., and was a graduate of Illinois State University and the DePaul University College of Law.

Arrangements are pending.

### **Kane County State's Attorney Joe McMahon said:**

"We have lost a true guardian of children, and I am so sorry about Deb's passing. I and the entire state's attorney's office are saddened by the loss of our friend and colleague, and the pain and suffering that her husband, Joe Gay, and their family are going through.

"Deb was my friend and was an important member of my leadership team. I will miss her friendship and legal acumen, and the passion and perspective that she brought to the office. Deb was a committed prosecutor and a champion of children and victims' rights. For 20 years she fought against child abuse, and she brought that same tenacity, courage and determination to her health battle over the last couple of years. With her passing she has allowed peace and comfort to take over.

“Please join me in offering emotional support for her husband, Joe, her four young children, and her parents, siblings and in-laws during this incredibly difficult time.”

**16<sup>th</sup> Circuit Chief Judge Clint Hull said:**

“Many of us in the judiciary worked with Deb during our time with the Kane County State's Attorney's Office or Kane County Public Defender's Office. Many others got to know her when she appeared before them in court, stepping up on behalf of the citizens of Kane County. No matter how we met or got to know Deb, everyone walked away with the same impression – she was an incredible prosecutor and an even better person.

“Deb made a lasting impression on the 16th Judicial Circuit. She was passionate about her work as the executive director of the Kane County Child Advocacy Center and invested countless hours on behalf of the children of Kane County. She was a force to be reckoned with in the courtroom – intelligent, prepared and charismatic. She could wow a courtroom with her passion and argument.”

**Kane County Public Defender Rachele Conant said:**

“I had the good fortune of working with Deb for her entire career and it was always a pleasure. She was a fierce advocate but always nothing but professional. She never had an unkind thing to say and always greeted me with a smile. Unfortunately, we do not get to say that about a lot of people in our lives and for us, in this office, we will remember her professionalism and her kindness always. I will truly miss working with her.”