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PRESS RELEASE

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JOANNE MILLER

Madison County

Miller Promoted to Probation Director

(Wampsville) Joanne Miller of the Madison County Probation Department was promoted to department director recently. Miller began with the county 14 years ago as a probation officer.

A Bridgeport native, Miller graduated from Cicero-North Syracuse High School and earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from SUNY Oswego. It was while in college that Miller found herself interested in probation; she said she thinks it is the blend of identifying client needs and holding them accountable that made the field attractive to her.

After graduating college, Miller spent three years working for the Administration for Children's Services in New York City and another two years working for PEACE, Inc. She came to the Madison County Probation Department in 2000 and had worked her way up to the position of deputy director before the director's position became available earlier this year.

"The field has become more law enforcement-centric," Miller said of probation trends she has witnessed over the years. "It is more dangerous because we are supervising more serious offenders. Prison closings have made probation more feasible for a number of populations."

State requirements have changed, also, Miller said, with probation officers required to collect DNA evidence, complete more extensive training and perform more field work. That has resulted in the necessity of heightened safety procedures and personal protective measures.

Like other local municipal programs and services, mandates continue to be implemented without consideration of how to pay for them, and long-established functions – such as the pretrial release program – are being reimbursed a greatly reduced rate compared to what they cost to conduct.

“Drug trends are also changing,” Miller said, explaining that marijuana has remained a constant, but that she has watched the drug of choice move from crack, to meth – “...though there is still some of that around...” with a brief foray into bath salts to an increasing market for heroin.

“With the crackdown on prescription medications, heroin is becoming more affordable,” Miller said. There weren’t too many surprises in the new job, Miller said, except for the incredible amount of paperwork that needs to be completed. She said she’s pleased with her staff and getting good feedback about the work the department is doing. Miller also was pleased there were no deficiencies in oversight or controls during a recent audit by the Office of the State Comptroller.

Probation actively participates in the county magistrates’ meeting, which has promoted good working relationships with the courts, and she said the judges seem genuinely interested in what they are doing. Miller said it is satisfying to provide victims restitution wherever possible and to give them a voice in court through presentence investigation input.

“Probation is not just supervising offenders,” Miller said. “It involves investigations and reporting to the courts, pretrial release work and diversion for youth offenders, among other things.”

Miller resides in northern Onondaga County with her children and dog; her parents still reside in Bridgeport.