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## Lake County Jail announces accreditation

### Jail is one of only four in state to achieve award

By Pat Christensen, Special to the Tribune

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The Lake County Jail recently announced it has been awarded accreditation by the American Correctional Association.

"The Lake County Jail is one of only four in the state of Illinois to receive such accreditation. It makes us very proud," said Megan Mercado, chief of corrections at the jail. There are approximately 102 counties with jails in the state of Illinois, according to state figures.

According to Mercado, of the 384 standards examined by the in the accreditation process, only 59 are mandatory. The remaining 325 are not mandatory, she said.

The Lake County Jail is in compliance with all but two of the non-mandatory standards, she said. According to Lannette Linthicum, chair of the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections, the standards address services, programs and operations needed for effective correctional management.

According to Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran, the assessment was done in January.

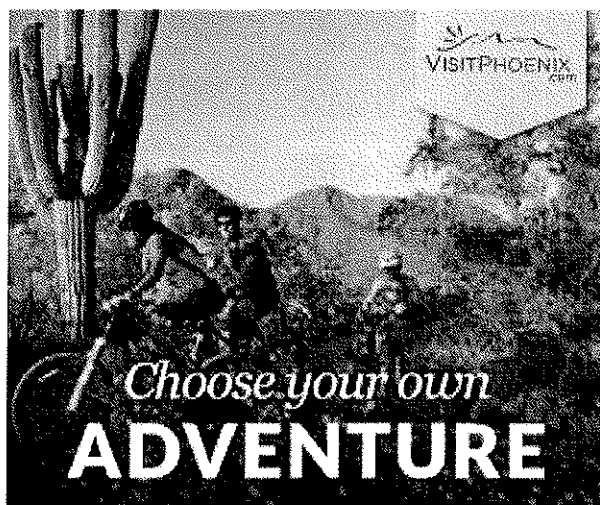
"The ACA comes into the jail and looks at our rules and procedures," Curran said. "They interview employees. They interview inmates. They take a look at the facility and observe if the procedures and policies are being adhered to. They do an overall assessments and that takes awhile."

Mercado said the jail is also examined every year to determine whether it complies with Illinois Department of Corrections standards, "but the ACA has more standards and they are above and beyond what the IDOC requires."

Mercado said some of the benefits of accreditation are being able to improve staff training and development, assessing program strengths and weaknesses, providing defense against lawsuits, reducing liability costs, establishing criteria for upgrading operations, providing a safe environment for staff and inmates, as well as improving staff morale.

Curran added that, "We never want to be 'status quo'.

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"We're always trying to improve," he said, "and I think that objective standards confirm what we're doing."

This is the third consecutive time the Lake County Jail has passed the ACA accreditation, according to officials with the American Correctional Association. The accreditation is given every three years and will next take place in 2015, officials said.

This year's award was presented in conjunction with the American Correctional Association Congress of Correction Conference held in Houston, Texas, on Jan. 28. The accreditation program is a professional peer-review process carried out nationwide.

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