



## BRYAN M. KIBLER

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September 8, 2014

Director Hiram Grau  
Illinois State Police  
Division of Administration  
801 South Seventh Street  
Suite 300-S  
Springfield, IL 62703

RE: Commendation for Zone 7 Special Agents

Dear Director Grau:

On September 7, 2013, the worst crime in the history of Effingham County occurred when Justin DeRyke brutally murdered his seven-year old niece, Willow Long, in the village of Watson and dumped her lifeless body in a rural pond. It was a horrific episode that stunned the Midwest and devastated Effingham County.

Just 10-months later, in view of insurmountable evidence, Justin DeRyke pleaded guilty and received a sentence of natural life imprisonment on May 29, 2014.

Such a swift and efficient disposition of this tragedy could not have occurred without the admirable service of the Special Agents of Zone 7 of the Illinois Department of State Police.

I wish to commend the following agents of Zone 7 who performed "above and beyond" in the DeRyke case, including: Brandon Grzechowiak, Albert Gallatin, Timothy Brown, Jeffrey Kline, Holly Finney, Ryan Shoemaker, and Kelly Hodge, who each demonstrated integrity service and pride. In the darkest hour of Effingham County, these agents really came through for our citizenry. We will remain forever thankful for their service

I personally witnessed numerous examples of the professionalism shown by the investigators in this matter and will relay two stories here.

On Monday, September 9, 2013, a terribly hot day on which the heat index rose over 100-degrees, my First Assistant, Scott Ealy, and I attended a meeting at the command center at around 5:00 p.m. All Zone 7 detectives were present. I was the only person not wearing a tie (except for Holly Finney). I spent my day in a cool office, and the agents spent their day in the corn fields. In fact, I couldn't tell if Ryan Shoemaker was wearing a gray or white shirt because his shirt was destroyed from searching the fields. I made fun of the agents for still wearing their ties despite the heat. All of the agents laughed politely and then we got down to business.



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Despite being up for more than 24-hours, the agents participated in a thorough and detailed discussion on where the case was heading. In terms of competency, execution and outcome, this was the most successful meeting of my life. Everyone offered up ideas. Ultimately, the group chose an agreed upon course of action that resulted in success.

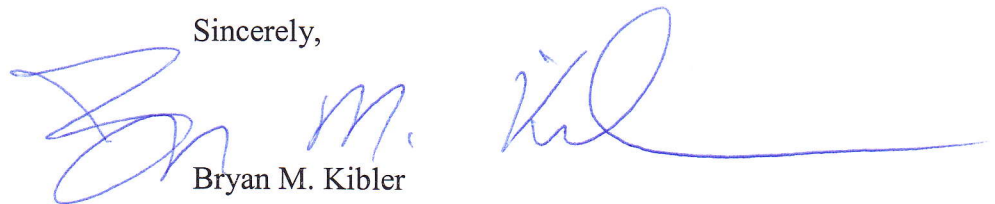
Another example of the outstanding work performed by the special agents occurred during the interview of the murderer, conducted by Jeff Kline and Tim Brown. In perhaps the most important situation of their careers, agents Brown and Kline hit a home run. It was not an easy task, but Brown and Kline broke down the murderer skillfully and obtained a lawful confession. Without the confession, the case might never have been resolved.

In closing, the employees of Zone 7 did an outstanding job in resolving the identity of the person responsible for the death of Willow Long. Without their professional work, this horrible crime might have gone unsolved.

Further, I believe Special Agents Tim Brown and Jeff Kline deserve special recognition for obtaining a lawful confession from the murderer. The interview conducted by Brown and Kline was a textbook example of quality law enforcement work.

In closing, I hope that you will join me once again to recognize each of these great agents for a job **very well done**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bryan M. Kibler", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bryan M. Kibler

BMK/jrr

cc: Hon. Patrick Quinn, Governor of Illinois  
Capt. Kelly Hodge, Illinois State Police District 12 Commander  
Mst. Sgt. Ryan Shoemaker, Agent-in-charge of Zone 7 Investigations  
Hon. John Cavaletto, State Representative, 107<sup>th</sup> District  
Hon. David Reis, State Representative, 109<sup>th</sup> District  
Hon. Kyle McCarter, State Senator, 54<sup>th</sup> District  
Hon. Dale Righter, State Senator, 55<sup>th</sup> District