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## WISCONSIN NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

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...world's oldest press association, established 1853

### NEWS RELEASE

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Brown County Register of Deeds Cathy Williquette has been chosen to receive the 2008 “Badger Award” for openness in government by the Wisconsin Newspaper Association (WNA) in recognition of her long-standing dedication as a public official to an informed citizenry. Williquette will be honored by WNA, the world’s oldest press association, at its annual convention Jan. 30 in Green Bay.

The “Badger Award” recognizes an individual, group or organization that has demonstrated outstanding efforts to protect and enhance openness in the conduct of the people’s business. It is the highest honor given by the WNA to a non-member. In creating the award in 2003, the WNA Board of Directors noted: “The free flow of information between government and the people is commonly referred to as the ‘people’s right to know’. It is essential to the principle of democracy.”

“Cathy Williquette’s commitment to making public records accessible is outstanding,” said WNA President Ken Dischler, editor and publisher of *The Park Falls Herald*. “Through her many years as a trusted and valued public servant she has demonstrated a clear understanding and use of Wisconsin’s open records laws. This award honors her commitment to open government in our state.”

Williquette has served Brown County residents as register of deeds for 25 years, elected to six consecutive terms. The 51-year-old Green Bay resident worked in the register’s office as a staffer for six years before being elected in 1984.

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During her tenure, Williquette has willingly made public records in her office available to citizens and has directed her staff to help reporters obtain information in the simplest way possible – including handling requests over the phone.

In addition to her long-standing dedication to an informed citizenry, Williquette played an important role in helping state newspapers obtain real estate transfer records for publication. Her cooperative spirit was instrumental in the passage of a 2008 bill supported by the Wisconsin Realtors Association and WNA that protected public access to certain real-estate transfer data. The state Department of Revenue had withheld the data after the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* published information from the state's real-estate database.

Williquette serves on Wisconsin's Electronic Recording Council, a state government group charged with developing administrative rules and guidance for implementing electronic recording of land documents by Wisconsin Registers of Deeds. Her term with the council expires in 2010.

The WNA "Badger Award," a crystal sculpture of a badger, will be presented to Williquette at the 155th WNA annual convention, held in 2009 at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center.

Past recipients of the "Badger Award" have been Gov. Jim Doyle (2004), Rep. Mark Gundrum, R-New Berlin (2005), Manawa Police Chief Kerry Schuetz (2007) and River Falls Police Chief Roger Leque (2008). No presentation was made in 2006.

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