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PRESS RELEASE
April 1, 2024
State's Attorney J. Hanley

Boone County State's Attorney Tricia Smith, together with Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley, announce that on March 28, 2024, the Illinois Prisoner Review Board voted to keep a convicted killer incarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections. Curtis Brownell was up for parole again for the 1977 murder of Louise Betts and brutal attack on Kathy Brickey. The Board voted unanimously to keep Curtis Brownell in prison. The board also agreed that Brownell will not get another chance at parole for four years. State's Attorneys Smith and Hanley joined with members of the Betts family and Ms. Brickey to speak out in opposition to Brownell's request to be released from prison.

In September of 1977, Brownell kidnapped Louise Betts, 16, while she was hitchhiking along North Second Street in Loves Park. After picking her up, Brownell sexually assaulted then murdered Betts, whose body wasn't found for several months in a rural Boone County field. Before police found Betts' body and arrested Brownell, he also tried to kill another Winnebago County woman. Kathy Brickey, who was seven months pregnant when Brownell abducted her from a Rockford laundromat, sexually assaulted her, and left her for dead. Both Brickey and her baby survived the ordeal.

In 1978, Brownell was convicted and sentenced to 100 to 300 years in prison. Since his conviction, Brownell has been denied parole more than a dozen times. The next time Brownell will be eligible for a parole hearing will be in 2028.

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