EQUAL ACCESS

November 2026



#GivingTuesday
IS DECEMBER 1!

A HELPING HAND
FOR VETERANS

THE POWER OF
PRO BONO

PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES

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FROM THE **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Denise E. Conklin

Dear PSLS Friends and Supporters,

As we end 2026, I reflect on my gratitude for our clients who choose to trust PSLS in their true moments of need to help them move past their civil legal issue. Thank you for being a friend of PSLS and believing in our mission of equal access to justice for all.

With your support of our non-profit law firm, we will remain steadfast in our mission for many years to come. Please consider joining the millions of others who choose to give each year on GivingTuesday. In 2025, GivingTuesday saw an estimated record-breaking number of 38.1 million donors globally! The power of giving is priceless, but deeply impactful in the communities that we serve. Every penny counts and no donation is too small. Your support and belief in PSLS' work will help individuals in your community who need a voice and legal advocacy.

Thank you for believing that high-quality legal services can make a difference in lives.

Denise E. Conklin
PSLS Executive Director

GIVING TUESDAY

WHY PSLS' **VETERANS WORK MATTERS**



Meet Samuel, a disabled veteran who struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Samuel relies on a fixed income to pay his bills and other living expenses. So, he had to act fast when a debt collector sued him for more than $20,000. Samuel applied for PSLS services and PSLS took on his case, filing an appearance in the court matter. PSLS staff listened to Samuel, helped him prepare supportive documents to request the dismissal of the debt collection case, and won! Thanks to PSLS' high-quality legal services, Samuel moved past his legal issue and is breathing a little easier.

Name was changed to protect client confidentiality.

A HELPING HAND FOR **VETERANS**

ILLINOIS ARMED FORCES LEGAL AID NETWORK

Since the launch of the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network (IL-AFLAN) in 2017, PSLS has partnered with Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (IEJF) to deliver free, high-quality legal services to low-income veterans, active-duty service members, and military families across our 36-county service area. With nearly a decade of sustained IL-AFLAN grant support, PSLS has helped hundreds of veterans protect their basic human needs when faced with critical legal challenges. If you are interested in helping PSLS strategically expand our funding and services for veterans, please reach out to PSLS' Director of Resource Development, Jenn Luczkowiak, at grants@pslegal.org to discuss your ideas.

PSLS Engages with Community at **MCLEAN COUNTY CARE FAIR**

From Bloomington Community Resource Specialist **Dameca Kirkwood:**

PSLS recently participated in the Care Fair hosted by McLean County Center for Human Services in Bloomington. The event brought together community organizations and service providers to connect individuals and families with information, resources and support available in McLean County.

As a representative of PSLS, I staffed an informational table where attendees could learn about free civil legal assistance and the type of legal issues for which PSLS may be able to provide support. The Care Fair provided a valuable opportunity to meet community members in an informal setting, distribute information, and increase awareness of civil legal services available to individuals who may otherwise have difficulty accessing legal assistance.



Participation in community events, such as the Care Fair, strengthens connections with local organizations and reaches people who may benefit from legal information and assistance.

PSLS Supporting Families Through **SUDDEN JOB LOSS**

From Moline Senior Community Resource Specialist, **Chiquita White:**

Recently, I represented PSLS at a resource fair hosted by the East Moline School District for families affected by the Tyson Foods plant shutdown in Joslin, Illinois. The closure displaced approximately 2,700 employees in and around the PSLS Rock Island County service area, leaving many people facing sudden job loss after years of employment.

The fair brought together local organizations and service providers to help families find support with financial, educational, healthcare and employment needs. Available resources included:

- **Financial and Health Resources:** Information about financial planning, Medicaid and local healthcare services.
- **Technology and Job Search Support:** Computer stations where families could create online profiles, complete job applications and access workforce development resources.
- **Education and Language Programs:** Information from the Black Hawk College Outreach Center and enrollment opportunities for the school district's free ESL classes, which also provide childcare.



PSLS participated because legal issues often arise during times of financial uncertainty. A sudden loss of income can lead to concerns about housing, debt, public benefits and other legal matters that may feel difficult to manage.

At the fair, I shared information about PSLS' free legal services and helped connect families with resources that may be useful as they move through this transition. The event was a good reminder that legal aid is an important part of a community's response during times of crisis. By meeting families where they are, PSLS can help them understand their options and protect their housing, financial stability and overall well-being

THE POWER OF **PRO BONO**

The 18th Annual National Celebration of Pro Bono was recently held Oct. 25-31. PSLS participated in the week long event to celebrate our very own champions of pro bono work. We are so fortunate to have a strong team of volunteers who genuinely believe in our mission and work alongside us to serve more clients in the communities that we call home. PSLS' Pro Bono Program is more than 350 volunteers strong, and consists of volunteer attorneys, paralegals and other professionals. Over the past year, PSLS pro bono attorneys represented more than 950 clients and made a lasting impact in their lives.

2026 DISTINGUISHED **PRO BONO ADVOCATE AWARD**

THOMAS NEWMAN



As part of our annual pro bono week celebration, PSLS honored Thomas Newman as its 2026 Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate. Thomas Newman is a senior partner at Peregrine, Stime, Newman, Ritzman & Bruckner, Ltd. in Wheaton. Mr. Newman began working with PSLS in 2021 when we saw an increased need for pro bono attorneys in eviction cases due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite his focus on family law in his private practice, Mr. Newman answered the call for volunteers and joined our Eviction Negotiation Project. Since 2021, Mr. Newman has accepted 35 cases, often taking on multiple cases at a time. He has donated over 80 hours of his time to represent clients facing potential homelessness.

These are difficult cases with significant consequences for clients, yet Mr. Newman continues to accept new cases, offering high-quality legal representation when clients need it most. Thank you for your continued dedication to this work!

2026 DISTINGUISHED **SERVICE AWARD**

JEFF CRABILL



This year, in addition to the Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate Award, PSLS honored Jeff Crabill with our Distinguished Service Award for his years of dedication to pro bono work.

Mr. Crabill began volunteering with PSLS in 2014 and has represented over 80 clients facing diverse legal issues, including criminal record expungement and sealing, housing issues, and family law cases. Over the years, Mr. Crabill has donated over 220 hours of his time. He is always open to learning new areas of law, volunteering with different projects and clinics to serve where he is needed most at any given time.

After many years of service Mr. Crabill is stepping back from pro bono work to pursue a new career path. Thank you for your many years of unwavering dedication to advocating for individuals in need!

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY **PRO BONO HONOREES**

In addition to the annual Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate Award, PSLS honors an outstanding individual or firm from across our pro bono program, from each of PSLS' 11 offices and the Telephone Counseling Unit. These honorees exemplify the theme of this year's National Pro Bono Week – "Serving Justice. Strengthening Democracy." – by volunteering their time and talent within their local community.

Congratulations to PSLS' 2026 Outstanding Community Pro Bono Honorees!

Learn about the Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate Award, Distinguished Service Award and Outstanding Community Pro Bono Honorees on **pslegal.org/news**.

Interested in joining PSLS' Pro Bono Program? **Please email: probono@pslegal.org.**



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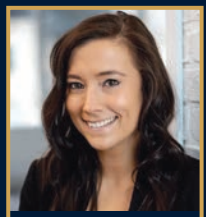
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PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES

National Celebration of Pro Bono!

October 25-31, 2026



Our deepest appreciation to the volunteer attorneys who worked on a case in the past 12 months:

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SPRING INTO PRO BONO
WITH PSLS IN 2027

PSLS' Spring Into Pro Bono Series is returning for a third year in 2027! The series offers attorneys *free* virtual CLE trainings. Attorneys who attend the series commit to a short-term or extended representation opportunity through an individual case referral or within one of our projects: Family Law Advice Clinic, Criminal Records Relief, Advanced Directives for Seniors and Telephone Advice.

The 2027 series topics and dates will be announced in the coming months!

STRIKE A CHORD
FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE



In September, PSLS' Together for Justice Team helped PSLS raise more than $20,000 at this year's Strike a Chord fundraiser in Lake County! The legal community took the stage to support PSLS, while more than 100 attendees enjoyed the music and community at 28 Mile Distilling Company in Highwood. Thank you to our generous Strike a Chord sponsors! Your support helps ensure equal access to justice in our communities.

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TAKING STRIDES FOR PSLS



More than 200 supporters joined us at the 19th annual Strides for Justice fundraiser in September in Peoria Heights. All proceeds benefit PSLS. A big thank you to the Peoria County Bar Association for hosting this event! We are also grateful to this year's Strides sponsors for helping make the 5K Run and 1 Mile Walk a success. During the after-party, PSLS Peoria/Galesburg Office Managing Attorney Thomas Dennis spoke to attendees and highlighted PSLS' work in the community.

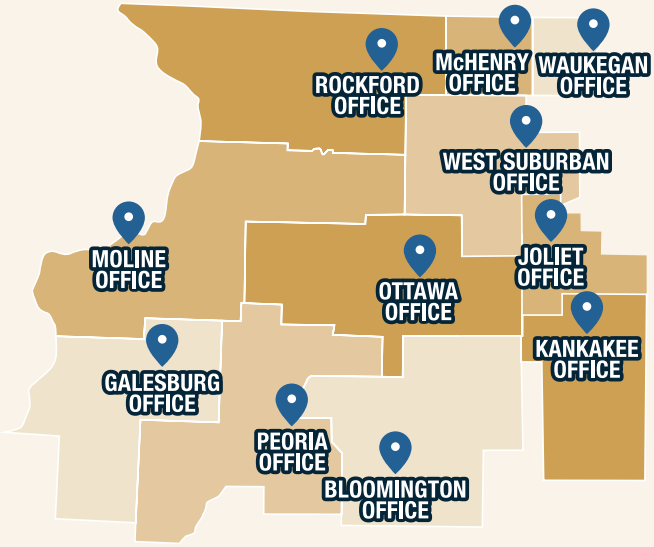
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GET INVOLVED

50th ANNIVERSARY 1977-2027
PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES

PSLS is working on plans throughout 2027 to celebrate our upcoming 50th Anniversary. If you have ideas or would like to get involved, join our Together for Justice Team (TFJ) or attend an upcoming meeting. Visit pslegal.org/TFJ to find TFJ meeting dates and sign up for a TFJ committee.



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855-347-7757

Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line
844-388-7757

Legal Assistance for Older Adults
888-965-7757

Low-Income Tax Clinic
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JOIN PSLS ON #GIVINGTUESDAY!

GIVING TUESDAY

SCAN ME for Facebook Fundraiser Instructions

SCAN ME to Set Up Your Facebook Fundraiser

National Philanthropy Day on Nov. 15 is a moment to reflect on and celebrate giving. Thanks to our many generous supporters, PSLS is able to continue its work of making access to justice a reality. In a few weeks, please consider joining PSLS on **Tuesday, Dec. 1 for #GivingTuesday**! Our goal this year is to raise $100,000 to help PSLS build brighter futures for communities across Illinois. Consider setting up a Facebook fundraiser page and engaging your friends and family on our behalf. **This helps PSLS share our mission with countless friends and family, and is one of our most effective ways to introduce new donors to PSLS!**

After you set up your Facebook fundraiser, please email PSLS at grants@pslegal.org, so we can track giving and thank donors properly. Not on Facebook? That's OK! You can give online at **pslegal.org/givingtuesday** or mail your donation to 303 North Main Street, Suite 600, Rockford, IL 61101.

PSLS is a charitable not-for-profit organization and gifts are tax deductible under IRS section 501(c)(3).

Administrative Office
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