

The journey is the reward.

**PRAIRIE STATE
LEGAL SERVICES, INC.**

2006
ANNUAL
REPORT

It is my pleasure to present the 2006 Prairie State Legal Services (PSLS) Annual Report, on behalf of PSLS's board of directors and staff. Each year, the annual report emphasizes our efforts to make equal justice a reality for the residents of Illinois.

Thanks to the broad-based support of the communities we serve, in 2006 the federal government increased funding for legal services for the poor for the first time in several years. In addition, in 2006 the State of Illinois increased funding to the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, which exists to ensure that all Illinois residents, no matter their income, are given a voice and the power to succeed in our justice system. Also in 2006, the U.S. Department of Justice awarded PSLS renewed funding under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), to support our work to assist the victims of domestic violence. These, and many other sources of funding, including many United Ways, and corporate and individual donors, enabled PSLS to help thousands of clients throughout northern and central Illinois.

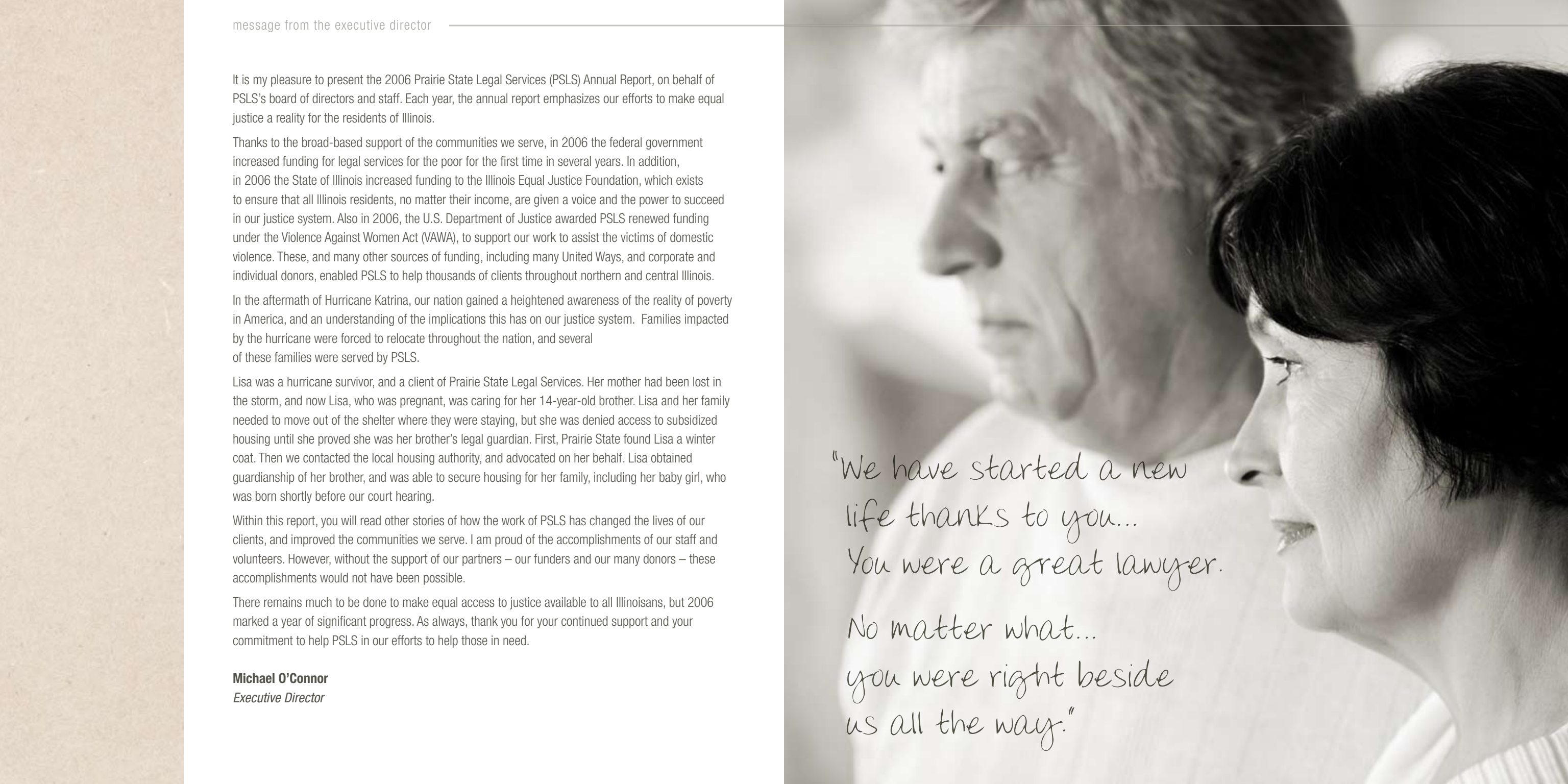
In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, our nation gained a heightened awareness of the reality of poverty in America, and an understanding of the implications this has on our justice system. Families impacted by the hurricane were forced to relocate throughout the nation, and several of these families were served by PSLS.

Lisa was a hurricane survivor, and a client of Prairie State Legal Services. Her mother had been lost in the storm, and now Lisa, who was pregnant, was caring for her 14-year-old brother. Lisa and her family needed to move out of the shelter where they were staying, but she was denied access to subsidized housing until she proved she was her brother's legal guardian. First, Prairie State found Lisa a winter coat. Then we contacted the local housing authority, and advocated on her behalf. Lisa obtained guardianship of her brother, and was able to secure housing for her family, including her baby girl, who was born shortly before our court hearing.

Within this report, you will read other stories of how the work of PSLS has changed the lives of our clients, and improved the communities we serve. I am proud of the accomplishments of our staff and volunteers. However, without the support of our partners – our funders and our many donors – these accomplishments would not have been possible.

There remains much to be done to make equal access to justice available to all Illinoisans, but 2006 marked a year of significant progress. As always, thank you for your continued support and your commitment to help PSLS in our efforts to help those in need.

Michael O'Connor
Executive Director



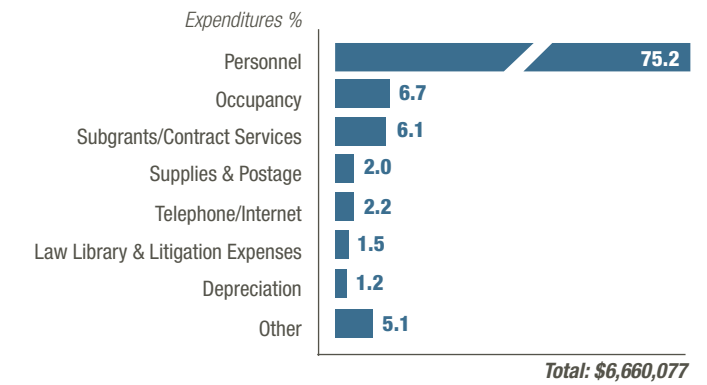
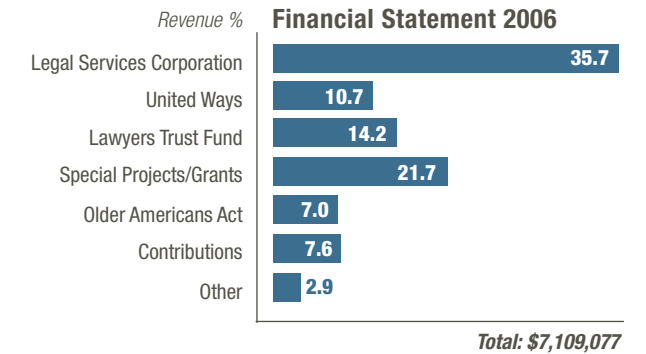
*"We have started a new
life thanks to you...
You were a great lawyer.
No matter what...
you were right beside
us all the way."*



"WHEN NO ONE ELSE
WOULD LISTEN OR HELP
ME, YOU GUYS DID."

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Prairie State Legal Services Inc.
975 North Main Street
Rockford, IL 61103
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A Prairie State staff attorney had helped return our grand kids back home with us. Their father came one day and took them away, there was nothing we could do for the neglectful father and we had cared for them for many years. Prairie State helped us get them back. They were so helpful.



Safety and Stability Returns to Children Under Guardianship of Their Grandparents

A Prairie State Attorney was able to obtain Letters of Guardianship for the grandparents of three minors whose father had forcibly removed them from the grandparents' home. The children had been living with the grandparents for many years when the father took them. Although the father had prior neglect charges, he had legal custody; therefore the authorities were unable to pursue this as a criminal matter. The whereabouts of the children was unknown for many months after the removal. However, when the grandparent located the children, they contacted our project attorney who brought a guardianship proceeding, Letters of Guardianship were granted. This case was important for the grandparents, who were desperate to protect the children, It was important for the children, as the father had them living in a car, a hotel and other temporary locations.

Facts and Figures (2006)

Staff and in-house volunteers completed 16,102 cases. The Volunteer Lawyer Projects completed 632 cases. Altogether, these households contained 37,876 persons, including 18,600 children.

Prairie State Helps Disabled Woman Obtain Medicaid

A fifty-two year old woman who lives alone came to Prairie State after receiving word from the Department of Human Services that she had been denied disability-based Medicaid benefits. She had no private health insurance. She suffered from narcolepsy and severe osteoarthritis of the knee and was no longer able to work. Her doctors had stated that the arthritic damage to her knee made it difficult for her to walk or stand. Just days prior to her appointment with Prairie State she had fallen down the stairs and was injured. Despite these facts, the State concluded she was not disabled. Prairie State helped her file a timely appeal of the denial of Medicaid benefits, prepared a written legal argument on her behalf, and convinced the State agency to reverse its decision. This medical coverage will enable our client to get the care she needs to prevent avoidable deterioration of her health.

I CONTACTED PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES AFTER I WAS NOTIFIED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES THAT I WAS DENIED DISABILITY-BASED MEDICAID BENEFITS. I SUFFER FROM A MULTITUDE OF AILMENTS THAT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR ME TO WORK. PRAIRIE STATE HELPED ME FILE MY APPEAL AND THE STATE HAD REVERSED THEIR STATEMENT. I CAN NOW ENJOY MY LIFE.



Case Types (2006)	%
Family Law	44
Housing Cases	24
Soc. Sec./Public Benefits	8
Consumer/Utilities	11
All Other	13

When I suffered a heart attack I became dependant on Social Security to make ends meet. I lived in a mobile home park and recently have been unable to make my payments. I had an agreement with the landlord that he would buy my mobile home and he went back on his word. I did nothing I could do, until I called Prairie State. They helped me tremendously. I can now pay my loan.



Mobile Home Resident Released from Debt to Landlord Who Fails to Honor Agreement

Our client relied on Social Security after suffering a heart attack. He lived in a mobile home, but could no longer afford the mobile home loan payment or the lot rental. The landlord of the mobile home park agreed to sell the client's mobile home and apply the net proceeds to his lot rental obligation. Reneging on the agreement, the landlord made no attempt to sell the mobile home or solicit offers for the home, but rather sued the client for eviction seeking substantial money damages. Attorney Tom, serving pro bono, negotiated a very favorable settlement for the client. After our pro bono attorney pointed out the landlord's apparent breach of fiduciary duty by attempting to profit from its refusal to attempt a sale of the property and the failure of the landlord's attorney to comply with the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, the landlord paid off the client's mobile home loan, released its claim for past due rent, and paid the client approximately \$2,000 in cash.

Client Demographics (2006)

Gender	%
Female	76
Male	24
Age	%
under 18	2
18-29	29
Thirties	24
Forties	20
Fifties	11
60-74	10
75+	4

Ownership of Property Restored to Elderly Client

Our client gave a power of attorney to his daughter. She told the client that she was using the power of attorney to refinance the home and had client sign some papers. The daughter did refinance, but she also had the client unknowingly sign a quitclaim deed transferring ownership of the home from the client to the client and daughter in joint tenancy. When things soured between them, she threatened to sell client's home. On behalf of the client, we revoked the power of attorney and drafted new documents giving a power of attorney to a more trusted daughter. We rewrote client's will and filed an action to quit title in order to protect client's home. The lawsuit raised claims of breach of fiduciary duty, fraud, and constructive fraud. The court entered an order declaring our client the sole owner of the property and a judicial deed was filed with the county recorder's office.

PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES REPRESENTED ME WHEN MY DAUGHTER HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF A SITUATION AND THREATENED TO SELL MY HOME. THEY HELPED ME REVOKE THE POWER OF ATTORNEY AND WE GOT UP AND SIGNED ALL OF THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS FOR ME TO REGAIN WHAT WAS MINE. THEY WERE SO HELPFULL AND FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROCESS.



Client Demographics (2006) *cont.*

Racial Breakdown %

White	66
Black	23
Hispanic	8
Asian	1
Other	2

Each year, dozens of partner organizations commit their resources in order to help us provide legal services for populations and communities throughout our service area. In 2006, the following partners helped ensure access to justice for tens of thousands of clients in northern and central Illinois.

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Batavia United Way
Bureau County United Way
Central Illinois Agency on Aging
Chicago Department of Public Health
City of Aurora Police Department
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DeKalb County Community Services Department
Doris and Victor Day Foundation, Inc.
DuPage Community Development Commission
DuPage Community Foundation
Dwight Community Chest
East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging

Far Northwest Suburban United Way
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Geneva Community Chest
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United Way of Pekin
United Way of Pontiac
United Way of Rock River Valley
United Way of the Quad Cities Area
Warren County United Way
Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging
Winnebago County Health Department

We are deeply grateful to the following individuals, law firms and organizations for their generous support of Prairie State Legal Services. They help us realize our shared vision of equal access to justice through their support of the Campaign for Legal Services, the Joe Dailing Fund, and local fundraising events.

\$10,000 or more

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