

EQUAL ACCESS

November 2024

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SPOTLIGHT

DEC. 3 IS
**#GIVING
TUESDAY**

CHANGING LIVES
THROUGH
PRO BONO



**PRAIRIE STATE
LEGAL SERVICES**

PSLEGAL.ORG

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Denise E. Conklin

Dear Friend of PSLS,

As the holiday season quickly approaches, I want to share my gratitude with you. I am grateful for the hard-working, compassionate staff at PSLS who care for each and every individual who reaches out to us for a helping hand. My gratitude extends to PSLS volunteers who share the same level of commitment to our clients and the desire to help clients meet their basic needs and improve their lives.

Beyond PSLS' amazing staff and volunteers, I am grateful for all of PSLS' friends and supporters who allow us to provide clients with high-quality legal services free of charge. It is invaluable to have an engaged team that works together and believes in PSLS' mission of equal access to justice for all. With your support, PSLS has continued to assist clients with legal issues related to financial stability, housing and safety.



FINANCIAL STABILITY

PSLS believes that everyone deserves an opportunity to provide for themselves and their family.



HOUSING

PSLS believes that everyone deserves a safe space and decent place to call home.



SAFETY

PSLS believes that everyone deserves to live free from abuse and violence.

Thank you for standing beside PSLS and advocating for our clients' basic needs. Please enjoy this edition of the Equal Access Newsletter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise E. Conklin".

Denise E. Conklin
PSLS Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT: DEB GOLDBERG



We reflect on 2024 with a philanthropist and PSLS Board Member who discovered PSLS in 1984 as a young mother who recently passed the bar in her second trimester while remaining unemployable in Lake County, Illinois.

Deb began by sharing a story she has told countless times to PSLS staff, volunteers, donors, and her circle of friends. Asking that she describe the path she began blazing to include PSLS in her growth as mother, attorney, community and philanthropic organizer and often leader upon request, Deb promptly explained the connection between family values and community philanthropy as if she was laying out a case in court.

"And if you listen," she smiled over her screen from Las Vegas, "I can tell you exactly what it is... It's genetics."

DEB: My commitment has been *actively* with Prairie State for 37 years and began a little before that in 1984. I had just been admitted to the bar and I was seriously Wild Kingdom pregnant. Remarkably, I couldn't get a job and joined the Lake County Bar Association. I saw an article on *The Docket* about Prairie State Legal Services. The article inspired me to volunteer. I knew I wanted to do some good with my degree while I wasn't working. I met Jen Morrison, a PSLS coordinator, mind you this is a million years ago, and volunteered until I was promptly put on bed rest.

PSLS: I wonder what the article was in 1984, who wrote it, etc.? We may need to investigate the archives.

DEB: My connection was made in '84 and I began to volunteer in '87 after opening my own office in Lake County. It's genetic with me. My grandparents were labor organizers right out of central casting. My parents marched for Dr. Martin Luther King in Cicero. I grew up in high school during the Vietnam War and spent many days protesting. I was in the streets of Chicago in 1969 although nowhere near the convention. It's genetic. I had to do something right and good.

Her eyes glimmered through her glasses. Passion and purpose lit her face. We could have been in a courtroom.

DEB: PSLS was such a natural fit. For one thing, the cases are vetted. I know they are legitimate. I happen to speak Spanish fluently. Whoa was there a need within our community. When I opened my office there were just three of us in Lake County that could serve the Latinx community. Then things began to fall into place. I then served on what was called the Legal Aid Committee. This was a bar association organization, but it later merged

with PSLS. We all worked well together. Much later, PSLS took over this volunteer lawyers program. Initially it was a bar association thing, but we ceded that committee to PSLS because it seemed so much more logical and efficient. That's the deal. I began as a pro bono volunteer taking cases with PSLS and serving on the Legal Aid Committee, then the Campaign for Legal Services [PSLS' former geographically-based fundraising committees], the Together for Justice Team [PSLS' new program-wide fundraising committee], and now on the Board of Directors. Just forever and ever, and I plan to do that forever and ever.

PSLS: I can see the generational line of purpose and determination passed on through your family. As you grow in your personal and professional life, so you grow in your philanthropic and community life.

DEB: I am a perfectly ordinary person, but I have lived the most extraordinary life and I absolutely have to help other people do the same thing. We as attorneys have a professional responsibility to offer our services to those who need us. So lucky me, I get to do both. Well, three things actually: nature, nurture and education!

She later confides that the pro bono case she is litigating with the support of our West Suburban office is going to kill her. "Two and a half years...how much longer can this go on for families needing closure?"

"We as attorneys have a professional responsibility to offer our services to those who need us."

DEB: It's good and well to write a check and I do it monthly and not just to PSLS. I need to do something. I need to get my hand in there and connect and do something. I get more out of that experience. I'm not knocking the writing of checks. Lots of people can't volunteer. Public defenders, State's Attorneys and certain businesses don't allow volunteerism. I'm not knocking the check, because we have to keep the lights on. For me, it wasn't enough.

PSLS: We are aware of the dire need that many Illinois families are experiencing on a daily basis. The tidal wave of need that was felt across social service nonprofits during COVID-19 was focused on immediate pandemic needs. We continue to see increased need for housing stability. Almost half of our cases in 2023 centered around housing. As you know we have doubled in

size over the last decade to address growing civil legal needs, what growth milestones do you want to brag about?

DEB: The growth is sad. The fact that we need to serve more people is very disturbing. The fact that our major funding source could also disappear is frightening. Whatever I can contribute in terms of ideas, fundraising and awareness is certainly very gratifying to me. When I was President of the Lake County Bar Association and the President of the Association of Women Attorneys of Lake County, PSLS was just openly and obviously our philanthropy of choice and I would book no dissent. I'm trying to keep my profile a little lower so people don't get sick of hearing from me!

PSLS: Last question, Deb. We hear from PSLS volunteers and staff about your fiery chats and great advice while carpooling to meetings and collaborating on cases over the years. When you consider philanthropic impact, do you consider the value of these chats? Impact is difficult to quantify but undeniable when you experience it.

DEB: Many of my best friends have worked for PSLS. My partner for 20 years was the Director of the Waukegan office and then left to go into private practice. PSLS brought us together. I had a case with him. We got to know each other and then one day at a PSLS event we learned his partners were retiring and I was looking for a partner. We kinda looked at each other and we became partners for 20 years. My best friend in the whole world, Gretchen Fisher, worked for PSLS. The people I admire most, my mentors Gary Schlesinger and Yolanda Torrez, I met through PSLS. I learned so much from them. I hate to sound really OG here, but we used to teach volunteers how to do things. Kevin Kane and I taught people how to do simple divorces and those participants agreed to take a PSLS case once the training was over. Anytime a volunteer takes a case now, the entirety of PSLS is there to support them when help is required. I have learned how the organization works from PSLS staff and a little gossip too when we have time! My friendships are deeper and my professional learning is deeper because of these chats.

If Deb's story has inspired you to get more involved with PSLS, you can contact probono@pslegal.org to learn more about handling a pro bono case, or you can email KathyFrederking@pslegal.org to learn more about helping PSLS fundraise through its Together for Justice Team.

National Celebration of Pro Bono!

OCT. 20-26, 2024

PSLS recently celebrated the 16th Annual National Celebration of Pro Bono! PSLS appreciates each and every volunteer for helping move the needle toward making justice a reality in all the communities that PSLS serves. Over the past year, PSLS' Pro Bono Program has grown stronger to nearly 350 volunteer attorneys, paralegals and other professionals.



Thank you to all the pro bono attorneys who have worked on a case in the past 12 months:

Anthony Abear
David A Agay
Adrienne Albrecht
L. Kat Allen
Karissa Anderson
William Anderson
Frank Andreano
Steven Balk
Jack Ball
Peter Barclay
Hon. Robert Baron
Cliff Bartholomew
Brandon Baseman
Michael Bean
Ashley Bechtold
Joshua Bedwell
Andrew Bell
William Beneke
Kelly Bennett
Wendy Larson Bennett
Greta Berna
Kathryn Bettcher
David Black
Trisha Blake-Millar
Donna Blatchford
Kirk Bode
Christopher Bohlen
Jennifer Bonesteel
Eric Borneman
Summer Bourne
Deanna Bowen
Karen Boyd
Timothy Brandner
Hon. Michael Brandt
Mark Brent
Maria Bries
Ashley Broadstone
Joel Brown
Robert Burke
Anne Burton
Theresa Buskey
Hon. David Butler
Janet Buttrn
Deborah Cain
Donna Cain
Paul Cain
Wendy Calvert
Luke Carlson
Morgan Carr
Emily Carrara
Peter Carroll
David Carter
Kathleen Carter
Honorable Tionn F. Carter
Andrew Cassidy
David Castegnaro
Julie Cibulskis
Richard Claahsen
Maggie Clark

Lisa Coffey
Hon. Rosemary Collins
Laura Conroy
Mary Corrigan
Nina Cosentino
Corinne Cozort
Jane Craddock Ryan
Maureen Craig
Damian Crooks
George Cuonzo
Douglas Cuscaden
Floyd Dailey
Spencer Daniels
Ken Davies
Alex Davis
Claire de Chazal
Joseph Dehn
David Del Re
John Dickson
Olivia Dirig
Timothy Divis
Natalya Dobrowolsky
Terry Dodds
Patricia Donahue
Kimberley Donald
Donner & Company
Lucy Dorenfeld
Kathleen Doyen
Michael Doyen
Jeremy K. Drexler
Don Driscoll
Jeffrey Dunn
Maribeth Dura
Suzanne Eagle
Randall Ehlers
Charles Eisner
Hannah Eisner
Elizabeth Ellis
James Engelman
Dustin Essig
Angela Evans
Todd Fanter
Karren Farmer
Rita Farrell
Vanessa Favia
Nika Feeney
Debra Fennell
Mary Field
David Fish
Michael Fitzgerald
Katrine Fleishman
Adam Fleming
Michael Fleming
Jean Fletcher
Raquel Flores Vera
Peter Follenweider
Patricia Fong
Curtis Ford
Isabella France

Eric Frobish
Janet Fuenty
Chester Fuller
Aaron Galloway
Laura Gastel
Robert Geiger
Jason Gende
Eduardo Gil
Mitch Gilfillan
Kelly Giraudo
Deborah Goldberg
Neil Goltermann
Denis Gravel
Jay Greening
James Greenwood
Victor Gryniwicz
Matt Gubbins
Matthew Guthrie
Marissa Hanson
Daniel Hardin
Debbie Harper
Holly Harris
Daniel Harrod
John Harry
Katharine Hatch
Robert Hauser
Shawn Heffernan
John Heil
Stephen Heine
Jeremy Heiple
Rachel Hernandez
Cathy Higgins-Mora
Kim Hilton
Nathan Hinch
Frank Hoffman
William Hotopp
Deanna Hoyt
Otto Hurtado
Christopher Jackson
Marielisa Jackson
Neil Jackson
Elizabeth Jahoda
Carolyn Jansons
Matthew Jarka
Shireen Jayatilaka
Carrie Johnson
Gary Johnson
Heather Johnson
Keri Johnson
Shelly Johnson
David June
James Kane
Jenna Kearns
Roger Kellerman
Jan Kempe
Casey Kepple
Jennifer Kincaid
Evan King
Donald Knuckey

Michael Kraft
Tammie Krauskopf
Jeffrey Krumpe
Melissa Kuffel
John Kunze
Kelly Lancaster
Cinthya Lee
Rebecca Lee
Sarah Lee
Hon. Lori Lefstein
Timothy Leighton
Ann Leone
Pauline Levy
Emily Lewis-Gerig
Rebecca Leynaud
Michael Lied
Deborah Maas
Stephanie Macuiba
Rita Maldonado
Sharon Marcisz
Patti Marino
Chris McCall
Don McClarey
Thomas McClure
Katherine McCollum
Fiona McCormick
Deborah McCoy
Stacey McCullough
Dennis McDougall
Michael McElvain
Laura McGarragan
Katelyn Medina
Tami Meister
Jaci Mennenga
Noah Menold
Christy Meredith
Mary Metnick
Michael J Meyer
Alexander Mezny
Amber Mikula
Elizabeth Miller
Elsa Miller
Noah Miller
Benjamin Mills
Kelly Minshall
Layni Miramontes
Blake Mishler
Susan Mock
Valerie Moehle
Cathy Molchin
Brian Mooty
Gary Mueller
John Muir
Alec Murphy
G. Edward Murphy
Pierangela Murphy
Wendy Newkirk
Thomas Newman
Austin Nichols

Michael Nichols
Tiffany Noel
Bill North
Kimberly Norton
Lisa Nyuli
Kathy O'Brien
Thomas O'Neal
Ellen O'Rourke
Ray Odom
Thalia Pacheco
Grazyna Pagowska
John Palmer
Anquette Parham
Robert R. Parker
David Pearson
Carol Perkins
Cameron Pestinger
Haley Peters
June Peterson-Gleason
Paul Pfeiffer
Ann Pieper
Allison Piper Geber
Julie Pirtle
John Pratt
Sharbel Rantisi
Emily Rapp
Neeley Regas
Reno Renzetti
Mary Helen Reyna
Scott Richmond
Gerard Rickert
Yolanda Riley
Robin Ritter
Alex Rives
Boyd Roberts
Rick Roberts
John Robertson
Nick Rochford
Kathleen Rock
Jonathan Rosemeyer
DeAnna Rosinski
Sherri Rudy
Christopher Russelburg
Cheryl Russell-Smith
David Rutter
Jeffrey Ryva
Linda Salfisberg
Brandon Sarff
Nicole Sartori
Anthony Scariano
Judith Schening
Nancy Schilling
Gary Schlesinger
Gary Schmidt
Laura Schroeder
Erin Schumacher
Roman Seckel
Melissa Sedlacek
Joseph Sell

Lidia Serrano
May Sethaphanich
David Shair
Matthew Shaw
Catherine Sheehan
Marjorie Sher
Kenneth Shiner
Brian Shoemaker
Scott Shore
Justine Sim
Ravi Sinha
Joel Reid Skinner
Jack Slingerland
Darlene (DeeDee) Soderberg
Jessica Sparbeck
Christian Spesia
Bill Spiro
Jeremy Spitzer
Kirsten Steeves
Jacob Steinfink
Brian Stevens
Michael Strauss
Art Swanson
Andrew Szocka
Mary Szudarek
James Tabor
Bruce Thiemann
Kevin Thomas
Candice Thomason
Susan Tungate
J. Brick Van Der Snick
Carla van Dongen
Alicia VanRheeden
Natalie Vaughn
Barbara Vella
David Vogt
Dorothy Voigt
Cynthia Volk
Elizabeth Vonau
Steven Wakeman
Aaron Walner
C. David Ward
Peter Wasem
Jordan Weatherless
Timothy Weiler
Rebecca Whitcombe
Magdalena Wilk
Scott Williams
Kevin Wolfe
Jamie Wombacher
William Wombacher
Sarah Woollen
Kyle Worby
Eric Wudtke
Alonzo Zahour

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH PRO BONO



2024 DISTINGUISHED PRO BONO ADVOCATE

Each year, PSLS recognizes one volunteer as its Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate for truly going above and beyond to make a difference for clients throughout its service area. PSLS' 2024 Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate is Attorney Ray Odom! Thank you, Ray, for your dedication and advocating for individuals in need!

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PRO BONO HONOREES

In addition to the Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate Award, PSLS recognized one outstanding individual or firm from each PSLS Office for volunteering their time and talent within their community:

Bloomington: Michael McElvain

Galesburg: Sharbel Rantisi

Joliet: Elizabeth Miller

Kankakee: Rita Maldonado

Moline: Daniel Hardin

Ottawa: Heather Johnson

Peoria: Heyl Royster

Rockford: Roger Kellerman

Telephone Counseling: Victor Grynowicz

Waukegan: Peter Wasem

West Suburban: Reno Renzetti

Woodstock: Rebecca Lee

Learn about the Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate and Outstanding Community Pro Bono Honorees on pslegal.org/news. Interested in joining PSLS' Pro Bono Program? Please email probono@pslegal.org.

NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY NOV. 15

National Philanthropy Day on Friday, Nov. 15 is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of giving and celebrate the contributions people make across the world to countless causes and missions. PSLS is committed to fostering a culture where philanthropy grows and where generosity is boundless. The global theme of National Philanthropy Day, "Change the World With a Giving Heart," recognizes the vast compassion and empathy donors share. This collective impact of philanthropy is creating change in the lives of PSLS families as we face the legal issues of poverty together. Thank you to our volunteers, donors and supporters whose spirit of generosity defines our work. With your help we are creating meaningful change and addressing our community's most pressing legal challenges.

Would you like to honor a philanthropist in your community? Learn how: pslegal.org/ways-to-give.



CHANGE THE WORLD



WITH A GIVING HEART

**National
Philanthropy Day®**

Philanthropists run and walk to support PSLS' Peoria Office at the 17th Annual Strides for Justice event.

DO YOU NEED LEGAL HELP?

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation manages four state-funded programs that offer free legal help, advice and information to people who can't afford a lawyer.



25 YEARS ★
Powering Legal Aid,
Championing Justice
for All

FOR HELP WITH ISSUES SUCH AS FAMILY LAW, CONSUMER FRAUD, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & GOVERNMENT BENEFITS



Cook County Residents

Call CARPLS Legal Aid Hotline at 312-738-9200

Northern and Central Illinois Residents

Call Prairie State Legal Services at 800-531-7057

Central and Southern Illinois Residents

Call Land of Lincoln Legal Aid at 877-342-7891

Anyone in Illinois can visit IllinoisLegalAid.org to find simplified legal information, forms and other resources.



FOR HELP WITH EVICTION-RELATED ISSUES

Illinois tenants and landlords can contact Eviction Help Illinois to see if they qualify for free legal help.

Call 855-631-0811 | Text 'Eviction' to 844-938-4280 | Visit evictionhelpillinois.org



FOR HELP WITH VETERANS LEGAL ISSUES SUCH AS DISCHARGE UPGRADES AND BENEFITS

Illinois veterans, active-duty military and their families can contact the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network (IL-AFLAN) to see if they qualify for free legal help.

Call 855-452-3526 | Visit ilaflan.org

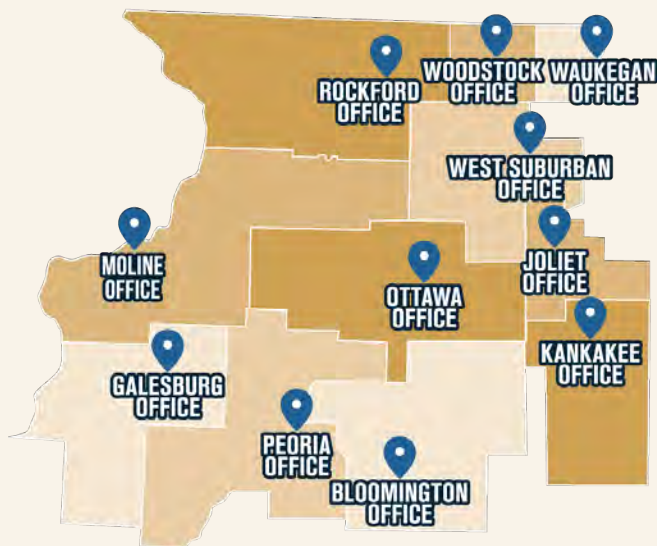


FOR HELP CLEARING CANNABIS RECORDS

Illinois residents can register with New Leaf Illinois to find out if they qualify for cannabis expungement.

Call 855-963-9532 | Visit newleafillinois.org

Civil Legal Aid Programs, the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network and New Leaf Illinois are funded through the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. Eviction Help Illinois is funded through the IL Department of Human Services.



PSLS OFFICES

BLOOMINGTON

Serving Livingston,
McLean and
Woodford Counties
Phone: 309-827-5021
Toll Free: 800-874-2536

GALESBURG

Serving Henderson,
Knox, McDonough and
Warren Counties
Phone: 309-343-2141
Toll Free: 800-331-0617

JOLIET

Serving Will County
Phone: 815-727-5123
Toll Free: 877-315-4472

KANKAKEE

Serving Iroquois and
Kankakee Counties
Phone: 815-935-2750
Toll Free: 800-346-2864

MOLINE

Serving Henry, Lee,
Mercer, Rock Island
and Whiteside Counties
Phone: 309-794-1328
Toll Free: 800-322-9804

OTTAWA

Serving Bureau,
Grundy, LaSalle and
Putnam Counties
Phone: 815-434-5903
Toll Free: 800-892-7888

PEORIA

Serving Fulton,
Marshall, Peoria,
Stark and
Tazewell Counties
Phone: 309-674-9831
Toll Free: 800-322-2280

ROCKFORD

Serving Boone,
Carroll, Jo Daviess,
Ogle, Stephenson and
Winnebago Counties
Phone: 815-965-2902
Toll Free: 800-892-2985

WAUKEGAN

Serving Lake County
Phone: 847-662-6925
Toll Free: 800-942-3940

WEST SUBURBAN

Serving DeKalb,
DuPage, Kane and
Kendall Counties
Phone: 630-690-2130
Toll Free: 800-690-2130

WOODSTOCK

Serving McHenry
County
Phone: 815-344-9113
Toll Free: 877-480-3020

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Adam M. Fleming

VICE PRESIDENT

J. Michael Bean

TREASURER

John K. Kim

SECRETARY

C. Garrett Bonsell

MEMBERS

William Beckman
Maria Best
Kenneth Davies
April Foster
Deborah L. Goldberg
Louis Hobson
Jasper Jones
Rebecca Lee
Carol Loughridge
Joseph D. Lovelace
Jim Rowe
Randa Salinas
Ambrea Samuels
Leila Siena
Scott J. Smith
Chasmine Thornton
Sonni Choi Williams

PSLS HELPLINE NUMBERS

General Telephone Counseling
800-531-7057

Fair Housing Project
855-347-7757

Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line
844-388-7757

Legal Help for Homeowners
888-966-7757

Legal Assistance for Older Adults
888-965-7757

Low-Income Tax Clinic
855-829-7757



**PRAIRIE STATE
LEGAL SERVICES**



PRAIRIE STATE
LEGAL SERVICES

303 North Main Street, Suite 600, Rockford, IL 61101

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROCKFORD, IL
PERMIT NO. 2495



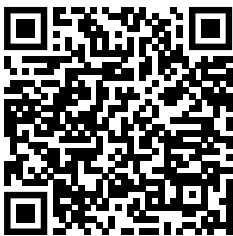
JUSTICE BEGINS WITH YOU!

GIVING TUESDAY

JOIN PSLS ON DEC. 3 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 page and engaging your friends and family on our behalf:

Facebook
Fundraiser Guide



SCAN ME

Start Your
Facebook Fundraiser



SCAN ME

After you set up your Facebook fundraiser, please email kfrederking@pslegal.org.

Instead of Facebook, 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).



PRAIRIE STATE
LEGAL SERVICES

Administrative Office
303 North Main Street
Suite 600
Rockford, IL 61101

CONNECT WITH US!



pslegal.org