

# **Madison County to Host Expungement Day With Land of Lincoln Legal Aid**

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**WOOD RIVER** — Madison County and Land of Lincoln Legal Aid are joining forces next month to host a free event, Madison County Ready to Work Expungement Day.

The expungement day will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday, Sept. 27 at Madison County Employment and Training, 101 E. Edwardsville Road, Wood River. At the event, volunteer attorneys and paralegals will meet with applicants to help them prepare petitions to expunge and/or seal their Madison County criminal records.

The petitions can then be filed with clerks from the Circuit Court Clerk's Office who will be present at the event.

Director of Employment and Training Tony Fuhrmann said finding employment with a criminal background could be difficult.

“Expungements makes them (applicants) more employable,” Fuhrmann said.

An expungement is a legal court order that destroys a criminal record and removes it from public view. Records that cannot be expunged because they resulted in convictions may be eligible to be sealed, which limits who has access to them. It may be several months from when a petition for expungement and sealing is filed until a judge makes a decision on it.

Daniel R. Kuehnert, a staff attorney with Land of Lincoln, said that criminal records often prevent people from landing a job or getting a higher paying job.

“The mistake you make at 18 years old shouldn’t prevent you from getting a job when you’re 40,” Kuehnert said. “A criminal record can be a major barrier in seeking employment, housing and education.”

Registration for the event is required and is open to the first 100 people. Visit <http://bit.do/r2w>, email [MadisonReady2Work@gmail.com](mailto:MadisonReady2Work@gmail.com) or call (618) 462-0029, ext. 3021 to sign up.

The deadline to register for the event is Sept. 13.

Kuehnert said it is more beneficial to society to allow citizens the opportunity to work and live productive lives than to be held back by youthful missteps resulting in an arrest or conviction. He said although Illinois law prevents a potential employer from asking someone if they’ve been arrested on a job application, as someone moves further into the process of being hired, a background check may still show the arrest.

“By clearing their criminal histories as much as possible, people are granted freedom to seek better opportunities to improve their lives,” he said.

Earlier this year, Kuehnert and a paralegal started working with individuals referred by Employment and Training as part of the Ready to Work Initiative. Land of Lincoln’s Western Regional Office in Alton received monies from the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois for a two-year program to assist individuals seeking to overcome barriers to employment, which can include issues with driver’s licenses, occupational licenses, or other legal issues, in addition to criminal records.

Fuhrmann said while people are waiting to see an attorney they will be provided with information from Madison County Employment and Training and Illinois Department of

Employment Security about job opportunities or training. Employment and Training is a part of the Southwestern Illinois workNet Center, which utilizes partnerships and technology to access workforce development resources aimed at individuals, employers and workforce/education partners.

“Once a person’s record is expunged they have more options,” Fuhrmann said.