

# Land Of Lincoln Legal Aid Seeks Nominations For 50th Anniversary Awards

by Lura January  
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COLLINSVILLE - Land of Lincoln Legal Aid, a legal aid provider in central and southern Illinois, is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year! As part of its celebration, Land of Lincoln is seeking nominations for awards to be given at its 50th Anniversary Party in Collinsville, Illinois on Thursday, October 27, 2022.

A letter of nomination outlining why the individual or group is a good candidate for the award should be emailed to Clarissa Gaff, Executive Director, at [cgaff@lincolnlegal.org](mailto:cgaff@lincolnlegal.org) no later than Friday, September 16, 2022.

Criteria for the four awards are listed below:

### *Lois Wood Lifetime Achievement Award*

The Lois Wood Lifetime Achievement Award is given to an attorney or judge who has provided extraordinary and dedicated service over their lifetime to the low-income community by promoting and improving equal justice for low-income people. Lois Wood worked at Land of Lincoln Legal Aid for 43 years, starting as a staff attorney before serving as a managing attorney and then Executive Director for 13 years. Lois was a fierce attorney, particularly on behalf of tenants, homebuyers, and farmers. She brought a class action on behalf of East St. Louis Housing Authority tenants that resulted in HUD taking possession of the housing authority and spending more than \$80 million in repairs on housing units and \$55 million demolishing and replacing public housing units. She represented farmers who challenged the unfair and capricious treatment by the USDA with regards to lending and paying disaster benefits. As Executive Director, she oversaw the diversification of Land of Lincoln's funding after funding cuts by the Legal Services Corporation. She led several successful fundraising campaigns that built reserves, prevented layoffs, and led to the purchase of two buildings for offices and upgrades and professionalization of the other offices. She was an early adopter of many technological improvements during her tenure. She retired in 2017.

### *Ethel Sylvester Community Service Award*

The Ethel Sylvester Community Service Award is given to a non-attorney individual, group or non-profit for their extraordinary service or support of the delivery of legal services to low-income people; or, who has promoted and improved equal justice for low-income individuals in their community. Community service could be through a variety of means including, but not limited to community activism, promoting legislation or lobbying, creating a non-profit, or generally providing services to low-income, justice-involved individuals. Ethel Sylvester served on Land of Lincoln Legal Aid's Board of Directors for more than 40 years. She was a public housing activist for more than 50 years. She served as President of the Gompers Tenant Council for close to

30 years and was at one time also on the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. She worked closely with Land of Lincoln on the filing of a class action in 1985 which resulted in HUD, for the first time, taking control of a housing authority that was failing its residents. Ethel was a leader in many other community struggles, including the successful effort to preserve a community hospital. Ethel also devoted many years as a volunteer for the Senior Companion and Hospice programs.

### *Russell K. Scott Equal Justice Award*

The Russell K. Scott Equal Justice Award is given to a judge or member of the private bar who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in promoting and supporting legal aid and/or expanding and improving access to justice for low-income people. Russell K. Scott has been a licensed Illinois attorney since 1974 and has practiced with Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale since 1999. He has served on the Board of Directors of Land of Lincoln Legal Aid from 1989 to the present. From 1994—2010, Russell served as President of the Board of Directors and led several successful fundraising campaigns during this period and beyond. As a member of the St. Clair County Bar Association Public Relations Committee, he helped found the first pro bono program in St. Clair County in 1984 and has remained an active participant to this time. He chaired the Illinois Supreme Court's Pro Bono Committee. In recognition of those contributions, in 1995, he received the Illinois State Bar Association's John C. McAndrews Pro Bono Award. In 2001, Russell received the Judge Richard A. Hudlin Memorial Award for Community Service from the St. Clair County Bar Association. He was a recipient of the Illinois Bar Foundation's Distinguished Service to Law & Society Award. He is a Laureate of the Illinois Academy of Lawyers and, in 2018, was presented with the rarely given Medal of Merit by the Illinois State Bar Association.

### *The M. Ann Hatch Award*

The M. Ann Hatch Award is given to a law firm that encourages and provides exemplary pro bono service to low-income Illinoisans or has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the provision of civil legal aid to low-income people. M. Ann Hatch has been a licensed Illinois attorney since 1978. She began her career as a public defender before moving into civil litigation. She is currently a shareholder with Sandberg Phoenix and has tried more than 70 jury trials. Ms. Hatch has served on Land of Lincoln Legal Aid's Board of Directors for several decades and was its President from 2011 until 2016. She helped raise more than \$3 million for its successful Bringing Justice Home Campaign and continues to fundraise on its behalf. Ms. Hatch has served on the Board of Directors for CASA of Southwestern Illinois for more than 20 years and is its current President. She was the first woman President of the St. Clair County Bar Association. She was a recipient of the Illinois Bar Foundation's Distinguished Service to Law & Society Award, The Judge Richard A. Hudlin Memorial Award for Community Service

from the St. Clair County Bar Association, and the Missouri Lawyers Weekly ICON Award.

*About Land of Lincoln Legal Aid*

*Land of Lincoln Legal Aid provides free civil legal services to low-income persons, senior citizens, veterans and active military in 65 counties in central and southern Illinois, with the belief that all Illinoisans should have access to justice, income security, adequate housing, quality education, healthcare, safety from violence and exploitation, and the opportunity to improve their own lives.*