



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Attorney General Janet Reno Honored for Commitment to Justice Reform**

*Lutheran Social Services of Illinois spotlights prisoner rehabilitation at annual gala*

(CHICAGO) Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno will be honored by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) for her lifelong service and dedication to justice at this year's Amicus Certus ("True Friend") Gala on November 1. The Amicus Certus Award is given to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the human community. Reno is being recognized for her pioneering work on prisoner rehabilitation and justice reform, as well as her continuing advocacy on behalf of juvenile offenders and wrongfully convicted prisoners. Past honorees include U.S. Senator Paul Simon; Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity; and Rotary International.

Reno's selection coincides with the focus of this year's gala, which benefits Building Homes: Rebuilding Lives, a program of LSSI's Prisoner and Family Ministry. Building Homes: Rebuilding Lives is a nationally recognized partnership between LSSI, Habitat for Humanity and the Illinois Department of Corrections. The program provides job training in the construction trades through 17 Illinois prisons. Inmates in construction classes build wall sections, trusses, cabinets and storage sheds, which are, in turn, used by Habitat for Humanity volunteers and other not-for-profit groups to construct affordable housing. Approximately 7,000 inmates have helped build 583 homes for low-income families since the program's launch in 1995.

"We are honored to present the Amicus Certus Award to Janet Reno," says the Rev. Frederick Aigner, Ph.D., LSSI president. "During her time as U.S. Attorney General, among her many accomplishments, Ms. Reno helped raise the public's awareness that prisoners are more than incarcerated felons — they are individuals with the capacity to give back to communities, as well as to accept and embrace their role as parents."

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Citing Ms. Reno’s work to enable community involvement in the justice system, Aigner adds, “Her ability to see prisoners and the justice system from a larger perspective is congruent with LSSI’s focus on restorative justice — that justice must be about much more than punishment — it must focus on a holistic reconciliation of victims, offenders and communities affected by crime.”

**A pioneer in the justice system**

Reno was the first woman to serve as U.S. Attorney General and the longest-serving U.S. Attorney General in nearly two centuries. During her tenure, from 1993 to 2001, she focused on broad anti-crime programs involving rehabilitation and treatment, as well as preventative efforts, such as hiring additional police and gun safety. Reno helped President Clinton win passage of the 1994 crime bill, which included increased legal protections for women and children under the Violence Against Women Act. She also pushed for reforms to assist troubled youth at the earliest possible age and advocated teaching conflict resolution in schools.

Prior to becoming U.S. Attorney General, Reno service as Florida’s first woman state attorney and became known for her attention to children’s rights, drug cases and juvenile justice reform. Since leaving Washington, D.C., she has been an outspoken advocate for criminal justice reform and is executive producer of *Song of America*.

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**About the Annual Amicus Certus Gala**

The Annual Amicus Certus Gala, hosted by the Women’s Network of LSSI, will be held at the InterContinental Chicago Hotel at 505 North Michigan Ave., in Chicago. Bob Sirott, news anchor of NBC 5 Chicago, will serve as master of ceremonies. Orion Samuelson, of WGN Radio and 1996 Amicus Certus honoree, will serve as auctioneer. Tickets are \$300 each, with table purchase and other sponsorship options available. For more information about the Amicus Certus Gala or to make reservations, contact Ed Newton at 847/635-4656, or [Edward.Newton@LSSI.org](mailto:Edward.Newton@LSSI.org).

**About Lutheran Social Services of Illinois**

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LSSI’s services include foster care, adoption, pregnancy counseling, Head Start, child care services, services for at-risk families, residential services for youth, counseling, mental health, substance abuse treatment, residential programs for adults with developmental disabilities, housing and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, nursing care and rehabilitation, and programs for prisoners and their families. For more information on Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).