



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
November 13, 2008

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

*Lutheran Social Services of Illinois spotlights construction training program for prisoners  
at annual gala*

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) honored former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno on November 1 for her lifelong dedication to justice, particularly her pioneering work in justice reform, crime prevention and prisoner rehabilitation, as well as her continuing advocacy for juvenile offenders and the wrongfully convicted. LSSI's Amicus Certus ("True Friend") Award is given to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to humanity. Past honorees include U.S. Senator Paul Simon; Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity; and Rotary International.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Amicus Certus Gala was emceed by NBC-5's Bob Sirott, while WGN Radio's Orion Samuelson, who received the award in 1996, served as auctioneer. The event, which was held at the InterContinental Hotel Chicago, was chaired by Sally Aigner and Marilynn Mantell. Approximately 260 guests attended.

Reno's selection coincided with the focus of this year's gala, which raised approximately \$95,000 for *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 — the first of its kind in the nation — provides job training in the construction trades in 17 Illinois prisons. Inmates in construction classes build wall sections, trusses, cabinets and storage sheds, which are used by Habitat for Humanity and other not-for-profits to construct affordable housing. Approximately 7,000 inmates have helped build 583 homes for low-income families since the program's launch in 1995.

"There is a real congruence between Reno's work and our work," says the Rev. Frederick Aigner, Ph.D., LSSI president. "She is about what we are about: *justice*. Reno has spent her life

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fighting the underlying causes of crime, abuse and neglect — recognizing the importance of bringing healing, justice and wholeness to communities, which is our mission at LSSI.”

“Like Reno, we at LSSI want to give offenders opportunities to give back to their communities and become productive members of society. And that’s exactly what our *Building Homes: Rebuilding Lives* program enables them to do,” concludes Aigner.

**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 served 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. She is a founding member of the board of directors of the Innocence Project and executive producer of *Song of America*.

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**About Lutheran Social Services of Illinois**

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, based in Des Plaines, is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). 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).