



Dear **Friends**,

As spring blossoms around us, I'm reminded of the resilience and growth that define not only this season but also the work we do together at MidPenn Legal Services.

This time of year offers a renewed sense of purpose—a chance to reflect on the progress we've made and to recommit ourselves to advancing justice for those who need it most. I continue to be inspired by the dedication of our staff, volunteers, supporters, and community partners who make this mission possible.

Every day, our team works tirelessly to provide essential legal services to individuals and families facing life-altering challenges—whether it's ensuring safety through protection orders, helping someone secure critical income or housing, or standing up for the rights of marginalized communities. Your support helps turn those efforts into lasting impact.

As we move through the year, I encourage you to stay engaged with us—whether by attending our events, sharing our mission, or exploring new ways to get involved. Together, we are building a stronger, more equitable future for the communities we serve.

Thank you for standing with us. Your belief in our work continues to fuel meaningful change across the region.

Wishing you a season filled with hope, health, and renewal.

Warm regards,
Rhodia D. Thomas, Esq.
Executive Director

Carolyn Sexton

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Carolyn Sexton on February 24, 2025. Carolyn's unwavering commitment to justice and equality touched countless lives throughout her career.

Carolyn was a well-known and respected legal professional who provided free civil legal aid to individuals and families with low incomes facing legal issues related to housing and domestic violence across central Pennsylvania. Carolyn, a true heroine of York, PA, devoted 47 years to uplifting her community as a legal advocate.



She made history as the first Black Legal Advocate at MidPenn Legal Services and later served as their first Black Paralegal.

Over the years, Carolyn has won many awards. She was the only nonlawyer in the York legal community to be honored by the York County Bar Association with the Jane Alexander Award because of her exemplary work.

True to herself, Carolyn recognized that much work remained to fulfill the promise of "justice for all." Read Carolyn's full obituary [here](#).



Client Secures Final Protection from Abuse Order with Legal Support

A recent client reached out to our office seeking help with a **Protection from Abuse (PFA)** matter after experiencing a series of escalating and distressing incidents involving the defendant.

In one particularly alarming encounter, the defendant engaged in a heated argument with the client, then proceeded to retrieve a knife from the

kitchen, standing in the doorway and asking threateningly, "Is this what you really want?" This incident followed a pattern of emotional abuse, including threats of self-harm and continued harassment after leaving the shared residence.

With the support and guidance of Counsel, the client was able to present her story to the court clearly and confidently. Counsel played a critical role in helping establish a pattern of abusive behavior, giving the court a full understanding of the situation and the need for legal protection.

As a result of her courage and the dedicated legal advocacy provided, the court granted the client a **Final Protection from Abuse Order**, ensuring her safety and peace of mind. We are proud to stand beside survivors and support them in asserting their rights and protecting their well-being through every step of the legal process.

MidPenn Legal Services proudly received an **\$18,200** grant from the **Adams County Bar Foundation** during the Law Day Celebration on May 1. Managing Attorney Nicole Sipe graciously accepted the award, which funds a vital custody contract position in Adams County.

This generous contribution enables Attorney Andrea Singley to continue providing essential legal advice and representation to individuals facing custody matters who cannot afford legal assistance. Adams County Bar Foundation Chair Miranda Blazek, Esq. presented the award, reinforcing the Foundation's commitment to expanding access to justice in our community.



MidPenn Helps Disabled Veteran Overcome Burdensome Debt



At MidPenn Legal Services, we believe that every client deserves dignity, respect, and a second chance—especially those who have served our country. Recently, our team had the opportunity to advocate for a 66-year-old disabled veteran facing a deeply stressful situation that jeopardized his financial and emotional well-being.

The client, a White, non-Hispanic man living with multiple severe health conditions, receives care from a VA nurse three times a week. His only income consists of Social Security and veterans' benefits. Despite his limited resources and fragile health, he received a **Demand Notice** from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor stating that he owed **\$2,021.36** in unemployment overpayments—an amount stemming from a **\$885.00 overpayment dating back to 2001**.

Confused, overwhelmed, and unsure of the origin of the debt, the client turned to MidPenn for help. Our attorney immediately contacted a UC Claimant Advocate and discovered that the debt was linked to an old "fault overpayment" for not reporting wages over 20 years ago. The client, however, had no memory of the original incident and had never filed an appeal. A lien was placed by the Commonwealth in 2007 and renewed in 2012.

Despite numerous attempts to communicate with the Unemployment Compensation Benefits Unit, our attorney was met with roadblocks. After exploring multiple avenues—including the potential for bankruptcy and outreach to other legal advocates—there appeared to be no clear legal path forward. But persistence is a cornerstone of our work. After weeks of research, outreach, and advocacy, our attorney reached a **Deputy Chief Counsel with the Department of Labor's Unemployment Compensation Division**. Upon hearing the full story, the Deputy agreed to take the matter under review. A formal request was submitted, including a detailed letter outlining the client's medical condition, reliance on VA support, lack of assets, and the significant stress caused by the collection notices. The **Department of Labor agreed to remove the lien and cancel the debt entirely**.

MidPenn LITC Recovers Over \$8,000 in Tax Refunds

A 63-year-old client recently received a much-deserved victory after recovering **four years of wrongfully denied tax refunds**, totaling over **\$8,000**, thanks to the dedicated support of Attorney Bob Hamilton.

Despite filing his tax returns on time each year and properly claiming his refunds, the client faced significant setbacks when the IRS denied his refund claims and assessed a balance due of more than **\$5,000**. The issue stemmed from the client's employer failing to submit his **Form W-2s** to the IRS—an error entirely outside the client's control.

Attorney Hamilton stepped in to advocate on the client's behalf, submitting key evidence including **bank statements** and **paystubs** that clearly demonstrated the client's income and proper tax withholding. His efforts helped establish that the employer, not the client, was responsible for the discrepancy.

As a result, the IRS reversed the balance due and issued the refunds that the client had rightfully earned. This case is a powerful reminder of the critical role legal advocacy plays in ensuring justice and protecting the financial well-being of individuals—especially when systemic errors place the burden unfairly on taxpayers.



Upcoming Events

Centre Gives

SAVE THE DATE! MidPenn will be participating in **Centre Gives on May 14 & 15, 2025**.

Your donation during these two days can transform lives! Help us fight for justice for vulnerable individuals and families in Centre County who are facing critical civil legal problems but can't afford representation.

Together, we can ensure that everyone has equal access to justice, regardless of income. Mark your calendar and join us in making a powerful difference in our community!



Bridging Justice & Community [REGISTER HERE](#)

Join us for a moderated panel to discuss how legal services and programs from the academic and faith communities can increase access to justice for individuals in rural areas. Learn about the specific work that MidPenn Legal Services, Penn State Law, Centre County Adult Services, and Faith United Church of Christ do in your community.

MidPenn is now on [BlueSky](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Linkedin](#), [Threads](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Follow us for the latest information on our program and upcoming events.

We are excited to announce the Kickoff Event for
2025 Pursuing Justice Improving Lives Campaign -
and we'd be honored to have you join us!



We are delighted to invite you to join us for an
Open House at MidPenn Legal Services
 as we celebrate our continued commitment to justice and community impact!



[REGISTER HERE](#) more information click here: [Events Calendar](#)

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MidPenn Legal Services is a private, nonprofit law firm providing free civil legal services to residents in these Pennsylvania counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Centre, Clearfield, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Schuylkill and York. Contributions to MidPenn are tax-deductible as allowed by law. MidPenn Legal Services is a tax-exempt corporation under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). The official registration and financial information of MidPenn Legal Services may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1 (800) 732-0999..Registration does not imply endorsement. MidPenn may not expend funds for any activity prohibited by the Legal Services Corporation Act, 42 U.S.C..2996 et seq. or by Public Law 104-134. Public Law 104-134 §504(d) requires that notice of these restrictions be given to all funders of programs funded by the Legal Services Corporation.

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