“Fundamentally, we are storytellers. We tell the untold stories. We work to give voice to those whose stories have been ignored for far too long and to bring the truth to light.”

Tricia Bushnell,  
Legal Director, Midwest Innocence Project
Why do we exist?

It is estimated that between 2% and 5% of all prisoners in the U.S. are innocent. If just 1% were innocent, that would equate to over 20,000 wrongfully convicted prisoners.

Since the inception of the national Innocence Project, DNA testing has exonerated over 300 individuals. The average number of years they served: 14.

Mission of The Midwest Innocence Project

We advocate for and obtain the exoneration and release of wrongfully convicted people within Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, and Arkansas.

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“When JFK said the United States would go to the moon, he knew we would achieve the task ‘not because it was easy, but because it was hard.’ It would also ‘measure the best of our energy and skills.’ The exonerations we seek are not easy either, but MIP persists because we see it as a measure of our steadfast dedication to the idea that justice is deserved for every individual no matter race, creed, or class. We will go to the moon and back for our innocent clients because it is the right thing to do – and doing the right thing is sometimes hard and expensive.”

Oliver Burnette
Executive Director, Midwest Innocence Project

The MIP is a not-for-profit corporation and an independent member of the Innocence Network of organizations. We provide pro bono legal and investigative services to inmates with a substantial claim of innocence, but who cannot afford an attorney to navigate their case through the post-conviction landscape.
2015 Year in Review

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Thank you for an amazing year.
A Message from our Executive Director

Thanks to our progressive team, new partners, and supporters like YOU, MIP gains momentum

With Thanksgiving and the holiday season approaching, I look forward to our family’s traditional gathering on the farm where I grew up. But I am also reminded of the empty seats and incomplete family meals because innocent inmates endure yet another holiday behind bars, miles away from friends and loved ones. Being a part of helping our clients get back to their families through justice and exoneration is what compelled me to take this position in June 2014, and it’s just one reason which motivates our compassionate legal professionals, unwavering administrative team, and giving volunteers.

Looking at the work to do in the year ahead, the statistics are alarming; the number of viable innocence requests staggering; the active cases in litigation mounting. But the good news is... with your help the Midwest Innocence Project is making a difference.

Just like my holiday family meals that grow each year with new additions though marriage and births, so MIP grows. Our partnership with KU’s Project for Innocence is now a year old. We recently partnered with the Nebraska Innocence Project to better serve our clients in that state, as well as hire a new state coordinating attorney. And our partners at the Iowa Innocence Project are working in coordination with our office to add staff time and resources to the work their volunteers do every day. Again, the ability to grow is because of supporters like you.

Advocating for more justice

Since the inception of the Midwest Innocence Project in 2000, our organization has been involved in some form with exonerees like Dale Helmig, Ron Williamson, Robert Nelson, and Ellen Reasonover, to name just a few, who have their freedom thanks to hard-fought wins of MIP attorneys, partners, and innocence advocates. While our immediate goal is to exonerate the innocent in prison, we also believe reforms to the criminal justice system will prevent future wrongful incarcerations. Some of the issues include:

• Eyewitness misidentification
• False confessions
• Police and prosecutor misconduct
• Crime lab oversight
• Inadequate or improper lawyering
• Incentivized witnesses
• Exoneree compensation

MIP is well-positioned to expand its work in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Arkansas, but more exonerations will require additional staffing and funding.

The price of freedom

It takes years, thousands of dollars, and a skilled team of litigators, investigators, and support staff to free just one innocent man, woman, or death row inmate. The Midwest Innocence Project, a 501(c)(3) organization, operates with limited personnel and through assistance from partners, volunteers, in-kind donations, and monetary supporters. It is my role to ensure funding is spent wisely and efficiently, a job I approach very seriously. As you take a closer look at MIP, my hope is you will become as passionate about our cause as we and feel compelled to join us in our mission.

Oliver Burnette
Executive Director
Staff of five faces a full plate

As our Intake Analyst and Administrative Assistant, Penelope Kress is the voice of MIP, guiding new applicants and their families through our process while serving up compassion and optimism along the way.

Compelled to implement positive change wherever she goes, Kress came to MIP in January 2014 after working as a community activist in her hometown of St. Joseph, Missouri. Before staying home to raise her two sons, Kress was a Legal Assistant in the areas of immigration and intellectual property.

“I understand we are most of these inmates last hope, so I try to keep them going in any way I can even when they become discouraged with the system,” said Kress. “During this long and daunting process, they and their stories become a part of you.”

Her first order of business upon arriving at MIP was to work with new Legal Director Tricia Bushnell in implementing an intake process to improve efficiency. As our receptionist, Kress takes all calls, many costly collect calls from hopeful prisoners and other calls from tearful mothers and desperate wives and children. She sends hundreds of applications out a year and when they are completed and returned, she carefully reviews each 12-page innocence claim to determine it meets criteria. If exoneration doesn’t seem viable, she must break the news to all involved.

“When I have the tough job of explaining to those eligible to continue with review that they will spend three plus years on the wait list before it reaches an attorney. We have a backlog that goes back to 2002 and we’re currently screening cases received through 2006.” In the meantime, she gathers case documents and fields more calls from stakeholders.

“We’ve actually created more work for ourselves by taking on non-DNA cases,” she explained. “These cases tend to be those where judicial misconduct or breakdowns in the system are evident.”

On her worst day, Kress might pick up the phone to find out one of the prisoners on the wait list has died in prison. These are the workdays when she is especially grateful for the hour commute home to decompress.

“This job can eat you up inside and it’s not one you want to take home to your husband and kids. Sometimes I feel guilty spending time with them, working in my garden outside, or enjoying a sunny or rainy day because I know there are so many sitting in a tiny cell someplace who can’t enjoy the things we take for granted.”

“People often ask why we do what we do. And the answer is always our clients. Clients and applicants are the driving force behind the MIP staff and volunteers. Despite long hours and limited resources, we are honored to work towards justice for such inspirational individuals.”

— Tricia Bushnell
Legal Director, Midwest Innocence Project
Generous visionaries shape the MIP of today and tomorrow

After serving on the Midwest Innocence Project Board of Directors for years, R. Pete Smith succeeded Judy Heeter as Board President in 2013. Smith is the Chairman and Senior Partner of McDowell, Rice, Smith & Buchanan, P.C., where he has worked for more than 50 years. He and his wife, LesLee Huttie, also served as Honorary Chairs of the Faces of Innocence event in 2013.

“I came on as President during a time of transition,” explained Smith. “We had just hired our first full time Legal Director, but had no Executive Director or current office space.”

McDowell Rice provided space for MIP’s new offices in the Skelly Building, and McDowell Rice and Block and Company contributed office equipment, furnishing, etc. to establish what is now MIP’s permanent home. His firm’s staff also provided administrative functions until Oliver Burnette was hired as Executive Director, laying the groundwork for additional MIP staff.

Smith was instrumental in developing Heeter’s vision of MIP as a law firm, one directly handling and/or supervising the legal work involved in obtaining exonerations.

“The figures are staggering because the problem is wide spread and the number of clients needing our services continues to grow,” said Smith. “I recognize the need to fund MIP’s case costs and expenses.” As a major contributor and top fundraiser, Smith plans to continue supporting MIP and its Board in an advisory and fundraising role.

“MIP needs to continue to develop its law firm side,” he continued. “We have a remarkable talent in Tricia Bushnell. I am confident she can grow our ability to handle more and more cases faster and faster.” This can only happen with more donor support and funding for additional attorneys, concluded Smith.

2015 Board of Directors

Pete Smith (President)
McDowell, Rice, Smith & Buchanan

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University of Missouri-Kansas City
Law Student Representative

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School of Law Representative

David Welte
Community Volunteer

“As one of the few non-attorneys on the Board, my hope is that 40 years of business experience and past work with successful philanthropic organizations will provide a different perspective that will facilitate the group’s continued success. Much progress has already been made on extending MIP’s reach into other states such as Nebraska. While MIP is involved in close to 40 cases, there are at least 600 cases that cannot be addressed due to limited resources. There is obviously a great need to do more good work!”

David S. Shapland
CFO, Russell Stover Candies
Midwest Innocence Project 2015 Board of Directors
This summer MIP and NEIP formed a more formal partnership to continue collaborating on cases, as well as look for more efficient and cost effective ways to jointly administer and fund our common mission. A member of the Innocence Network, the Nebraska Innocence Project works to exonerate the innocent, educate the public, and improve the criminal justice system. Based in Omaha since 2007, NEIP is currently an entirely volunteer organization operating with a committed group of attorneys, law students, academics, retirees, and others. All screening and in-court representation is pro bono and individual donations fund DNA testing.

Our most immediate goal as partners is to begin joint fundraising to put the first paid lawyer on staff in Nebraska as the Nebraska State Coordinator. This coordinator will not only increase work on our Nebraska cases, but will allow support for some of the over 600 cases on MIP’s wait list in the five-state area.

The Innocence Project of Iowa
Iowa attorney Brian Farrell’s academic interests always skewed toward human rights law. Farrell was inspired to form a local innocence project after attending a national innocence conference and meeting exonerees first-hand. He and four other attorneys founded the Innocence Project of Iowa in 2007. Student volunteers are the backbone of the IPI, a nonprofit Innocence Network organization seeking to prevent and remedy wrongful convictions in the State of Iowa through case investigation, policy reform, and education. IPI has relationships with Iowa Lakes Community College, Buena Vista University, University of Iowa College of Law, and Drake University Law School.

Similar to the partnership with the Nebraska Innocence Project, MIP recently entered a collaborative arrangement with IPI. First priority is to expand Iowa’s capacity by accessing funding for a State Coordinating Attorney.

UMKC and University of Missouri Schools of Law
The Midwest Innocence Project was founded at the University of Missouri–Kansas City School of Law in 2000. Seven years later the University of Missouri System provided funding to launch a joint innocence project involving the UMKC Law School, the MU Law School, the MU School of Journalism, and the MIP with the assistance of UMKC visionaries Dean Ellen Suni and Professor Sean O’Brien, and MU journalism professor and author Steve Weinberg.

Through coursework and hands-on involvement in the Innocence Clinic, students, under the supervision of MIP attorneys, review case transcripts, develop investigation strategies, gather documents and evidence, search for witnesses, and conduct interviews.

University of Kansas School of Law
Since 1965, the Paul E. Wilson Project for Innocence and Post-Conviction Remedies at the University of Kansas School of Law has worked to obtain new trials for convicted individuals whose constitutional rights were violated. A new collaboration implemented in 2014 allows KU’s Project for Innocence to take on Kansas innocence cases that originate with MIP. The KU clinic receives financial support from MIP for investigation and litigation – including potential expert testimony and DNA and forensic testing costs – and gains access to the vast resources of the Innocence Network.

“This partnership with the University of Kansas School of Law helps us expand our capacity to take cases and gives us a presence in the classroom to teach the next generation of lawyers, investigators, and lawmakers how to identify and prevent these injustices,” said MIP Legal Director Tricia Bushnell.

Independent studies conservatively estimate that anywhere from 2,000 to 7,000 people in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, and Arkansas are serving time for a crime they did not commit. By generously sharing resources, manpower, and funding, partnerships inevitably generate greater good.

Grateful for the partnerships that expand our work in a five-state region

“We are always greater than the sum of our individual parts. This partnership with the Midwest Innocence Project will allow us to coordinate intake and litigation efforts for our innocent clients more efficiently. Your donation, no matter the size, will help fund a paid position to accomplish more good in Nebraska, as well as in Iowa. Can you bring us closer to our $10,000 goal to hire a part time attorney?”

Tracy Hightower-Henne Volunteer Attorney Executive Director of the Nebraska Innocence Project

“Thank you for your dedication and hard work to help our innocent clients.”

Tricia Bushnell
MIP Legal Director
Can you help for a just cause?

The Midwest Innocence Project cannot function without its team of dedicated volunteers from the legal community and caring individuals from all backgrounds. In addition to legal expertise, other volunteer opportunities include:

- Administrative support
- Database management
- Fundraising
- Marketing
- Event set-up

Give an hour or two a week or volunteer for a one-time event, whatever works best for you.

For more information on volunteering, visit TheMIP.org or call (816) 221-2166.

Thank You 2015 Office Volunteers!

- Lakisha Johnson
- Stephanie Sherman
- Morgan McCreary
- Patricia Griffiths
- Melissa Trimble
- Lindsay Perkins
- Tylesha Smith
- Sarah Jackson
- Cheryl Linder
- Emily Branch
- John Creager
- Kimberly Hardeman
- Grant Reichert
- Chip Smith
- Paula Ann Lumby
- James Powell
- Jennifer Hernandez
- Erin Steward
- Jean Rosenthal
- Maureen Stephan
- Rebecca Griffith
- Michael O’Gorman
- Barbara Cooper
- Janet Love
- Janet Love
- Jennifer Birk
- Carla Broadnax
- Caralee Broadnax
- Bryan Wilson
- Holly Yocum
- Morgan McCreary
- William Coen
- Nancy Bone
- Lindsay Perkins
- Shiloh White
- Ellen Waters
- Karen Schwartz-Peevy
- Claire Havley
- Will Borge
- Bethany Woodson
- Jennifer Lessard
- Sydney Ragsdale
- Diane Meyers
- Elisabeth Birky
- Vivian Gibbens
- Emily Blount
- Tim Sweeney

Grant Reichert, MIP Volunteer

During college and law school, Grant Reichert became interested in social justice causes. Once practicing as a criminal defense attorney, he became even more keenly aware of mass incarceration. The high number of prison inmates in the U.S. criminal justice system versus all other countries was especially alarming to Reichert.

“There then when I started thinking about how many of those statistics might be wrongful convictions, I got even more worried.” The 31 year old turned to teaching and volunteering at the Midwest Innocence Project.

Interestingly, Reichert’s first teaching position landed him at Lansing Correctional Facility where he taught political science to inmates through Donnelly College. Now he instructs an ethics course at Avila University, where he emphasizes criminal justice related issues. As part of the class, Reichert takes his students to Lansing.

His recent career path gives him the flexibility to offer MIP up to eight hours a week of volunteer time and legal expertise. Reichert digests case files for Legal Director Tricia Bushnell, reviewing paperwork, drafting motions, and requesting additional evidence when needed.

“I’ve seen a wide range of volunteers coming through MIP’s doors in the past year from current law students to investigators to those interested in studying criminal justice,” explained Reichert. “Tricia takes each individual’s unique talents and finds a way to use them to benefit MIP clients. Her passion is definitely an inspiration to me and to others as she guides us and mentors us towards the ultimate goal... freeing an innocent client wrongfully convicted.”

Reichert is currently delving into a 20-year old case with promising exoneration potential. “New revelations and new evidence are coming to light as I progress through the file. I’m excited to say there is still new work to be done.”

As a criminal defense attorney, Reichert only got to see a case go as far as the direct appeal point. “Through my work at MIP, I’m seeing an entirely new aspect of the criminal justice system that goes beyond the appeal process. MIP is the final stop and last hope for our clients making the work of staff and volunteers vital.”
When you support the Midwest Innocence Project, your donation goes to fund the important work of freeing the innocent before and during litigation.

2015 MIP budget: $550,000

Average cost of DNA testing: $1,400

Cases typically involve multiple tests on a number of items.

Hourly rate to hire an investigator: $85.00 per hour plus travel expenses

Average cost to prepare a case for litigation: $100,000 or more

The actual litigation portion of our work is only the tip of the iceberg. What does it take to track down witnesses from decades past? How many hours to find people who may be scared to tell the truth and identify the true perpetrator? The important investigative and preparation work is some of the most costly and time consuming, yet it is the foundation on which exonerations are built. These tasks are neither quick nor easy, but we leave no stone unturned for our innocent clients.

Average number of years to exonerate an innocent prisoner: 7-10 years

Painstaking investigation and good lawyering are required. The hours of investigation, the days of document reviews, the late nights of planning and strategizing often seem like insurmountable obstacles to bring truth to light. Those who are falsely convicted have been left behind with nowhere else to turn. Despite the overwhelming cost, through the continued support of our sponsors, MIP represents the last hope.

Average cost of a full exoneration: $325,000

Our professional staff, dedicated volunteers, and lawyers who donate hundreds of pro bono hours cannot meet this burden alone. We need your help to pay the hard cost of investigation, DNA testing, trial transcripts, and lengthy legal battles. Your support is an investment in the value we hold dear – JUSTICE, FOR THE INNOCENT!

Will you help us tell their untold stories?
The Midwest Innocence Project is actively investigating dozens of cases, with over 600 left on the waitlist. The average time already served for each of those clients with cases currently in investigation is over 20 years. Every story is unique and our staff works tirelessly to uncover the injustice of each wrongful conviction. MIP clients are currently serving time for crimes they didn’t commit, including cases where:

CASE A
The real perpetrator originally confessed to the crime and independent evidence supported that confession, but investigators instead believed the perpetrator’s subsequent recantation.

CASE B
Since the client’s conviction, the real perpetrator killed at least one witness to the case.

CASE C
Family members and a state employee testified that the defendant was at a family reunion at a city park, miles away from the crime.

CASE D
The treating physician in a child death case was subsequently prosecuted for child pornography and for secretly filming his patients.

CASE E
The defendant was applying for a gun permit at a law enforcement office at the time the crime was committed.

CASE F
The 15-year-old defendant was sentenced to life without parole.

Each case takes hundreds of attorney and investigator hours to uncover these truths. By the time a case is ready for litigation, the cost of attorney and investigator hours nears or surpasses $100,000. Your donation gives voice to the innocent and helps us find the truth that will set them free!

For protection of our clients and pending litigation, MIP is unable to share names or detailed stories of clients, although we have included the compelling recount of Kathy Hyatt, a friend of MIP wrongfully accused of Shaken Baby Syndrome in Missouri. Her story that follows lends voice to the thousands of innocent who can’t speak from inside their prison cell.
“There the doctors pointed directly to SBS,” said Hyatt. “Local law enforcement presumed me guilty right from the start. It was as if they were judge and jury wrapped into one. I knew I didn’t do anything wrong, so I became my own investigator.” Hyatt discovered that in recent years mainstream science now recognizes many natural causes for subdural and retinal hemorrhages that were once thought to be exclusively caused by an adult shaking a child. Dr. Plunkett and former proponents of SBS are now testifying on behalf of parents, caregivers and grandparents, noting falls and prior illnesses as potential causes of death. Dr. Plunkett was integral to Hyatt’s defense; she received a not guilty verdict in her 2009 trial after just 30 minutes of jury deliberation. “I didn’t choose this path, it chose me. God brought me through this nightmare for a purpose.” Hyatt dedicates her life to advocating against SBS. She receives calls from the innocent and their families from throughout the Midwest, across the country and around the world. After listening to their heartbreaking stories, Hyatt directs them to the same resources she found helpful in obtaining her freedom. “I’m sad that people are still being charged on the bogus Shaken Baby Syndrome because it is only a theory,” concluded Hyatt.

Legal Director Tricia Bushnell met Hyatt while moderating the Q&A portion of the program. Like so many innocent who find their lives in utter despair after a wrongful accusation, Hyatt found a way out of her darkness and into the lives of those in need. She is a valuable resource to the innocent and their families and a good friend to MIP.

As in many SBS accusations, the cases of Edmunds and Hyatt have certain similarities. Both defendants are also mothers eventually found innocent of shaking a baby to inflict harm. In Edmunds’ case, the child died, in Hyatt’s she did not, but both babies had either been sick or unusually fussy before coming under their care. Hyatt’s five year ordeal was chronicled in “The Syndrome.”

In late 2003, Hyatt was babysitting a one-year-old she had watched since birth, when for a split second she turned her head and heard a thud. Hyatt found the girl lying on the floor and used all her CPR training and rescue skills to resuscitate. Her husband, a 31-year veteran of the Missouri Highway Patrol (now retired), called 911 and traveled with the child first to their hometown hospital in Macon, Missouri, before seeing to her transport to University of Missouri Hospital in Columbia.
Funding needed for FBI Microscopic Hair Analysis Review

In 2013, the FBI, in collaboration with the *Innocence Project*, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Department of Justice, began an internal review of all cases in which the FBI laboratory performed microscopic hair analysis after new scientific advancements revealed flaws in the use of the analysis in criminal cases. With the FBI laboratory training microscopic hair analysts across the country during this time period, it means those same error types occurred in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Arkansas.

After finishing its review of the first 300 cases, the FBI has reported that improper testimony was presented in 96% of the reviewed cases involving hair microscopy. In response to the FBI’s findings, regional Innocence Network member organizations, including the Midwest Innocence Project, began developing ways to identify and assess cases wherein hair analysis was used to convict a defendant through the erroneous testimony or report of an examiner.

Support truth and justice for all

Those exonerated by DNA testing aren’t the only people who have been wrongfully convicted in recent decades. In each case where DNA has proven innocence beyond a doubt, an overlapping array of causes has emerged - from mistakes to misconduct to factors of race and class. For every case that involves DNA, there are hundreds of injustices through:

- Eyewitness misidentification
- False confessions
- Police and prosecutor misconduct
- Crime lab oversight
- Inadequate or improper lawyering
- Incentivized witnesses

The Midwest Innocence Project works to right these wrongs by advocating for reform. Fixing the broken justice system is the only sure way to end wrongful convictions.

“I review hundreds of pages of police reports, autopsy reports, lab reports, and crime scene material. I ID witnesses who might help me understand what happened. I locate those witnesses. I suppose the most difficult aspects of my work are societal and systematic. I noticed many, many years ago that the legal concepts of ‘reasonable doubt’ and ‘innocent until proven guilty’ were no longer courtroom dogma. Most of my wrongful conviction cases involve convictions on the basis that ‘maybe he did it’ – not even ‘probably’ he did it.”

Dan Grothaus
Investigator for the Midwest Innocence Project

Will you be a part of strengthening forensic science?

The Midwest Innocence Project is seeking private funders for the full first year project budget of $77,101.00 for a review of internal state case applications which involved potentially erroneous hair microscopy lab reports and testimony. The MIP will examine these cases in partnership with relevant laboratory, defense and prosecutorial partners.

Details of the project include:

- Hire Project Manager
- Identify potential innocence claims
- Strengthen and expand our network of volunteer lawyers
- Further develop cooperative working relationships with crime labs in the five-state region

To Donate go to: [www.TheMIP.org](http://www.TheMIP.org)
Raising the bar on the *Faces of Innocence*

The Midwest Innocence Project’s annual *Faces of Innocence* dinner and auction is our largest fundraiser of the year. It is a critical piece of the funding puzzle that allows the (expensive) work of freeing the innocent to move forward. Over 1,000 MIP supporters hear from those on the front lines of innocence work and have the opportunity to celebrate successes and aspire to do more.

Emcee Brian Banks led 2015’s impressive program featuring special guest speaker Michael Morton, accompanied by his attorney John Raley. Both Banks and Morton are exonerees turned innocence activists with nationally-publicized stories of wrongful convictions.

In 1987, Morton was wrongfully convicted of the murder of his wife and spent nearly 25 years in prison before exonerated by DNA evidence. After his release from prison in 2011, his prosecutor was convicted of contempt of court for withholding evidence. The Michael Morton Act was signed into Texas law in 2013 ensuring a more open discovery process.

In just two years, Banks has accomplished a lifetime of success after spending 10 years behind bars for a crime he did not commit. He went on to play professional football with the United Football League, and later signed with the Atlanta Falcons. Today he is a recognized public speaker and Life Coach.

MIP is forever grateful to 2015 *Faces of Innocence* co-chairs Judy Overton and Phyllis Norman for an extremely rewarding event held at the Muehlebach Tower of the Kansas City Marriott Downtown.

**Save the Date**

*Faces of the Innocence 2016: April 19, 2016*
Bailout detains new generation of supporters for all the right reasons

In its second year, the Midwest Innocence Project Bailout kicked off the Faces of Innocence fundraising efforts, nearly quadrupling its first year size and proceeds. Young, energetic, Kansas City up-and-comers and pillars of the community donned orange t-shirts for a fun and friendly competition to raise “bail,” set at $1,500 each.

In addition to legal professionals like James Stigall (Assistant Jackson County Prosecutor), participants also included those outside the criminal justice system and some familiar KC faces, including Blake Miller (Partner & Director of Accelerator at Think Big Partners), Erik Wullschleger (Director of LiveKC), Steve Roling (former Greater Healthcare Foundation President & CEO), and Alvin Brooks (civil rights activist).

The hip, chic Firestone Building in the Crossroads was the site of the happy hour event held on April 9, 2015.

“The Midwest Innocence Project is recognized and strongly supported by the legal community here in KC,” said Lindsey Heeter, 2015 Bailout Chair, a non-attorney in her ‘20s. “But most outside the justice system don’t really know about the plight of prisoners wrongfully accused.”

Heeter’s connections outside the legal community gave MIP an opportunity to capture an entirely new audience.

Heeter comes from a family deeply committed to innocence work. Her mother, attorney and local philanthropist Judy Heeter, is the former board president of MIP. Lindsey said she became even more committed to innocence causes after following the release of Missouri exoneree Ryan Ferguson. Her father, Jim Heeter, President & CEO of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, raised over $5,000 as a participant and received recognition as the 2015 Bailout winner at the Faces of Innocence benefit. The event garnered more than 500 new supporters.

Lindsey Heeter
Director, Western Office of the Governor
Midwest Innocence Project 2015-2016 Bailout Chair

Want to sponsor an MIP event?
Looking for a gratifying volunteer experience? Do you want to help raise awareness for the MIP mission?
Contact MIP Executive Director Oliver Burnette for more information: oburnette@themip.org | (816) 221-2166
With your support, the Midwest Innocence Project can secure justice for another innocent client in 2016.

Donate
funding now for more legal and investigative manpower

Pledge
to further our mission into the future

Partner
and share valuable resources

Sponsor
an event

Volunteer
your time

Advocate
for our cause

Demand
legislative reform

Spread Awareness
of our work

We are an organization that exists because of donor support. The Midwest Innocence Project has been growing in the last 15 years, demonstrating the desire of the public to fund our cause. With an estimated 5,000 innocent prisoners in our five-state Midwest region alone, there is much hard work left to be done. We are currently litigating 6 cases, investigating another 40 (with average time served of 20 years) and have 600 cases on our wait list. On average it takes 7-10 years to exonerate an innocent prisoner, at an average cost of $325,000. We believe we cannot put a price on human life; an innocent prisoner wrongfully convicted deserves freedom at any cost.
MIDWEST INNOCENCE PROJECT

Letters from the Innocent

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