

Community Services League celebrates a meaningful milestone: 110 years of neighbors helping neighbors

INDEPENDENCE, MO, UNITED STATES, July 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- What began in Independence as a small group of women responding to the needs of their community has grown into an organization serving thousands of neighbors across Jackson County. Over the decades, Community Services League ([CSL](#)) has changed and grown, but the heart of the work has remained the same: people caring for people.

"For 110 years, CSL has helped families put food on the table, stay safely housed, find employment, build financial stability, and move toward a stronger future," said Doug Cowan, Community Services League President/CEO. "That kind of legacy does not happen by accident. It

happens because generations of volunteers, donors, staff, partners, board members, and community leaders believe that our neighbors deserve both help for today and hope for tomorrow."

CSL is grateful for the generations of neighbors, volunteers, donors, board members, churches, civic leaders, businesses, schools, and community partners who have carried the mission forward since 1916.

A Legacy of Local Leadership

CSL began in 196 when a small group of women in Independence organized to respond to the needs of neighbors in their community. Among the early women connected to CSL's founding story was Bess Wallace, who would later become First Lady Bess Truman. Their simple act of service became the foundation for 110 years of care, partnership, and community impact.



To celebrate this milestone, we invite you to look at how CSL's work has grown across more than a century of service.

110 Years of Neighbors Helping Neighbors

For 110 years, Community Services League has stood alongside neighbors facing hardship, offering help for today and hope for tomorrow.

1916

A Movement Begins

October 19, 1917

Community Welfare League Formed

Bess Wallace (later Truman) was elected as Vice President and stood down in 1936 due to frequent out of town travel with her husband.

1920

Moving Into the Log Courthouse

1930s

Serving Through the Great Depression

1940s

Supporting Families During Wartime

1950s

Building Community Partnerships

1963

Eight Offices Serving Jackson County

1976

Community Welfare League Becomes CSL

Late 1970s

Christmas Store Begins

1985

First Mayor's Christmas Concert

1991

First Permanent Headquarters Purchased

1990s

Expanding Services

2011

New Headquarters Opens

2011

Expanded Housing and Homeless Services

2016

Celebrating 100 Years

2016

Financial Opportunity Center Designation

2017

POAH Partnership at Hawthorn Place

February 2025

Drop-In Center Opens

2025

Affordable Housing and Building Futures

March 2026

Two Million Pounds Removed

Summer 2026

110 Years of Service

As CSL celebrates this anniversary, there is deep gratitude for those who have been part of the story. The needs in the community continue to change, and CSL will continue to grow, adapt, and respond. The next years will be built the same way the first 110 years were built: together.

About Community Services League

With more than a century of service, Community Services League has made meaningful and lasting change in the lives of our neighbors living in Eastern Jackson County and beyond. Each year we provide integrated, life changing services to nearly 20,000 individuals, and connect thousands more to temporary assistance to get through tough economic times.

It's a mission built on Bess Truman's legacy of caring for neighbors in need. A mission that continues with a passion that is as strong as ever.

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