Prairie State Legal Services Honors Volunteers During National Pro Bono Week

Take a moment to congratulate the 2021 award recipients!

Prairie State’s pro bono coordinators had a busy October as they celebrated our many attorney volunteers during National Pro Bono Week from October 25-29. It was an honor to virtually showcase the great work of our many volunteers throughout our service area.

Together, and as individuals, our pro bono volunteers do amazing work every day. We thank the hundreds of attorneys who collectively volunteered more than 4,440 hours of service to provide pro bono representation to more than 2,100 clients in 2020, with services ranging from brief advice over the phone to extended representation in court. Thank you for the work you do, and for the difference you make.

Please join us in congratulating the following esteemed group of Outstanding Pro Bono Community Honorees.

In addition, congratulations to our 2021 Distinguished Pro Bono Advocacy Award recipients, Adam Fleming and McDonald's Corporation. These awards are presented annually to an individual and corporation or law firm for their exceptional commitment to pro bono services.

Adam, a partner with WilliamsMcCarthy LLP and Secretary of Prairie State’s Board of Directors, has been a long-time volunteer for Prairie State, accepting more than 40 cases pro bono in his time with the organization. Additionally, Adam has recruited other attorneys from WilliamsMcCarthy LLP, increasing the number of cases Prairie State can place. He also assists Prairie State staff attorneys with legal strategy, consultation, and he regularly lends his expertise to ensure clients’ needs are met.

Our partnership with the Law Department at McDonald’s Corporation began in 2016 with our telephone counseling service to provide advice and brief assistance to clients facing housing issues. Today, 14 different McDonald’s attorneys have volunteered more than 300 hours of their time, helping more than 300 different clients. In the last 12 months, seven volunteers have taken on almost 100 cases, devoting more than 110 hours of time.

While we appreciate the dedication of all of the McDonald’s volunteers, two attorneys stand out in their commitment to assisting Prairie State’s clients: Michael Meyer, Senior Counsel – Asset Management and Jonathan Rosenmeyer, Senior Counsel – Business Counsel & Franchise Practice Group. They each take on at least one case a week, and have each served more than 100 clients in their time working with Prairie State.

We are so grateful for the work McDonald’s employees continue to do for Prairie State and to Adam, for his dedication to the mission of our organization. Both are so deserving of this recognition.

If you missed the video presentations of our honorees and award recipients, please visit and subscribe to our YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/prairiestatelegal.
A Message of Thanks and Farewell from the Executive Director

To our friends and supporters,

It’s hard to believe, but we are approaching the end of another year. While 2021 has perhaps not been quite as strange and unsettling as 2020, it has been quite a ride nonetheless. Fortunately, as we approach 2022, it appears that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is now behind us, and we can begin to turn our attention to how we can best serve our clients and communities in this “new normal.”

By now, you are probably aware that after 15 years as Executive Director and nearly 32 years at Prairie State, I informed the board of my intent to resign in February 2022. This will be my last written message to you as Executive Director, so I hope I communicate just how grateful we are to you, our supporters, who help to make civil legal aid available to those in need.

As I previously wrote, I can promise you that this decision did not come lightly. There is never a perfect time for this type of transition, but now is the right time, for me and for Prairie State. We have made remarkable strides in recent years. And while I’m proud of these accomplishments, they aren’t about me. They’re about you. You’ve trusted, supported, and partnered with our team as we’ve taken bold leaps to grow Prairie State to the organization that it is today. I am also proud to say we are financially healthy and have the support of a strong board of directors and management team to ensure the day-to-day work of Prairie State will continue without interruption.

As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, I’ve been thinking about how special Prairie State is to me, and reflecting on the things in life I am most thankful for—and I am especially grateful for all of you. In reflection of your support, I would like to recognize our many volunteer attorneys who help Prairie State by accepting cases that would go unaddressed because of our staff attorneys’ workload. As we recently observed the National Celebration of Pro Bono, this issue of Equal Access is dedicated to hundreds of private attorneys who selflessly give their time to help our clients.

In this issue, you’ll also read about our board-led search committee’s work to secure my replacement; why we are revitalizing our brand by “refreshing” our more than 10-year-old logo identity and tagline; about the acceptance of two new grants; and upcoming opportunities to continue your support of Prairie State.

As you gather with your families and friends this holiday season, I wish for you a safe, happy and joyous celebration. I appreciate each of you and everything you contribute to making Prairie State and the communities we serve a better place.

Warm wishes,

Michael O’Connor

Michael O’Connor

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT
Steven Greeley

VICE-PRESIDENT
The Honorable Kenneth A. Leshen (retired)

TREASURER
John K. Kim

SECRETARY
Adam M. Fleming

MEMBERS
J. Michael Bean
William Beckman
C. Garrett Bonnell
Maria Joan Glisson
Deborah L. Goldberg
Louis Hobson
Jasper Jones
Karlene V. Jones
William R. Kohlhase
Julia A. Lansford
Carol Loughridge
Joseph D. Lovelace
Rolonda V. Mitchell
Scott Smith
Chasmine Thornton
Vera Traver
Soni Choi Williams

OFFICE LOCATIONS

BLOOMINGTON
Serving Livingston, McLean and Woodford Counties
201 W. Olive Street, Ste. 203
Bloomington, IL 61701

GALESBURG
Serving Henderson, Knox, McDonough and Warren Counties
311 E. Main Street, Ste. 302
Galesburg, IL 61401

JOLIET
Serving Grundy and Will Counties
18 West Cass Street, Fifth Floor
Joliet, IL 60432

KANKAKEE
Serving Iroquois and Kankakee Counties
187 S. Schuyler Avenue, Ste. 350
Kankakee, IL 60901

OTTAWA
Serving Bureau, La Salle and Putnam Counties
1021 Clinton Street
Ottawa, IL 61350

PEORIA
Serving Fulton, Marshall, Peoria, Stark and Tazewell Counties
411 Hamilton Blvd., Ste. 1812
Peoria, IL 61602

ROCK ISLAND
Serving Henry, Lee, Mercer, Rock Island and Whiteside Counties
1600 Fourth Ave., Ste. 200
Rock Island, IL 61201

ROCKFORD
Serving Boone, Carroll, Jo Daviess, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties
303 N. Main Street, Ste. 600
Rockford, IL 61101

WAUKEGAN
Serving Lake County
325 W. Washington St., Ste. 100
Waukegan, IL 60085

WEST SUBURBAN
Serving DeKalb, DuPage, Kane and Kendall Counties
31W001 E North Avenue, Ste. 200
West Chicago, IL 60185

WOODSTOCK
Serving McHenry County
400 Russel Court
Woodstock, IL 60098
Prairie State Receives $25,000 Mission Grant from The Community Foundation for McHenry County

Prairie State Legal Services was recently awarded a $25,000 Mission Grant from The Community Foundation for McHenry County. This grant will provide invaluable staff support in our Woodstock office and our work in helping residents in McHenry County who face the toughest legal challenges: children, veterans, seniors, ill or disabled people, and victims of domestic violence—to effectively navigate the justice system.

This generous gift is yet another demonstration of their outstanding commitment to the wellbeing of all in McHenry County. It’s wonderful to partner with The Community Foundation for McHenry County. Thank you for the support of our clients!

Prairie State Legal Services Reveals Brand Refresh

In early August, we began the process of revitalizing our brand by “refreshing” our more than 10-year-old logo identity and tagline.

“As we thought about our 45th anniversary in 2022, we thought it was the right time to take a good look at our brand, what it stands for and the values it represents,” said Jennifer Luczkowiak, Director of Development of Prairie State Legal Services. “These changes also are coming at a time when the organization is evolving.”

After vetting six marketing and advertising firms, we chose Rockford-based Ginestra-Watson, a full service advertising agency specializing in brand development and creating focused campaigns across multiple mediums.

“A logo refresh typically includes things like adjusting your brand color palette, tweaking your fonts, changing your tagline, and/or reorganizing your logo’s shape,” said Tom Massari, Manager of Marketing Communications of Prairie State Legal Services. “Think of our refresh as a logo ‘upgrade’ to help reflect current trends and make it more appealing to a contemporary audience.”

“You’ll notice that we preserved our well-known ‘scales of justice’ avatar, but reshaped and repositioned the avatar and scales within the State of Illinois. In addition, we removed the tagline from the logo, providing greater flexibility. We also updated our color palette, removing black, reinforcing a more positive brand ‘mood.’ Lastly, we switched out our font for one that is more modern,” Tom said.

The refreshed logo will roll out later this month, as well as our new tagline: Pursuing Justice. Restoring Hope. The brand refresh will launch in early to mid-December, with the first look appearing in our digital assets (e.g., social channels and websites). Updates to our core program-wide brochures and outreach kits are beginning this month.

“Think of our refresh as a logo ‘upgrade.’”

-Tom Massari, Manager of Marketing and Communications
Recognizing our Volunteers

Prairie State Legal Services would like to thank all of its pro bono attorney volunteers who have worked on a case in the past 12 months.

Prairie State Legal Services can help in civil legal matters, including:

- Family-related problems
- landlord and tenant disputes
- discrimination cases
- consumer issues
- probate matters
- problems with SNAP, TANF
- Orders of Protection
- Divorce
- Tax Problems
- Bankruptcy
- School Suspensions or Expulsions

www.pslegal.org

www.rockfordpubliclibrary.org.

Meetings may be scheduled ahead of time, by calling (815) 965-2902. Scheduled appointments will be prioritized. Walk-ins will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, please visit the Rockford Public Library events calendar at www.rockfordpubliclibrary.org.

Prairie State Legal Services would like to thank all of its pro bono attorney volunteers who have worked on a case in the past 12 months.
Recognizing our Volunteers cont.

Stacey McCullough
Jeffrey McDaniel
Laura McGarragan
Stephen McManus
Noah Menold
Christy Meredith
Rita Mertel
Michael Meyer
Jeffrey Meyer
Laurie Mikva
Todd Miller
Elsa Miller
Randal Miller
Valerie Moehle
Donald Morrison
Anna Morrissey
Michelle Mosby-Scott
Jamie Mosser
Gary Mueller
John Muir
Lisa Munch
Charity Murow
Elisa Nelson
Wendy Newkirk
Thomas Newman
Hope Nickel
Raymond Nolasco
Rodney Nordstrom
William North
Lisa Nyuli
Patrick O’Brien
Helen Ogar
Scott Ostericher
Thalia Pacheco
Anqunette Parham
Beth Peccarelli
Howard Perlitz
Carol Perkins
Susan Pesch
Brian Peterson
June Peterson-Gleason
William Petsche
Frances Pitts
Jesse Placher
Sheila Pont
Bradley Popurella
Haiyan Qu
Craig Queen
Sharbel Rantisi
Charles Rea
Stuart Reid
James Reilly
Henry Repay
Hon. Charles Reynard (ret.)
Elizabeth Rice
Jourlande Richardson
Gerard Rickert
Charlene Rieffer
Paula Riegns
Yolanda Riley
Rodolfo Rios
Catherine Ritts
Troy Roberts
John Robertson
Blaise Rogers
Charles Rose
Jonathan Rosemeyer
Michele Rosenfeld
Rhonda Rosenthal
Alexandra Rothenberg
Carol Ruda
Dee Runnels
Christopher Russelburg
David Rutter
Brandon Sarff
Jordan Sartell
Bartholomew Scagnelli
Bradley Schencker
Judith Schening
Thomas Scherschel
Nancy Schilling
Gary Schlesinger
Danny Schroeder
Derek Schroen
Anthony Scofo
Roman Seckel
Bruce Self
Brian Shoemaker
Scott Shore
Tracy Simmons
Angela Skinner
Jack Slingerland
Alyssa Smith
Darlene Soderberg
Christian Spesia
Bill Spiro
Robert Stavins
Laurel Steele
Kirsten Steeves
Jacob Steinfink
Michael Strauss
Karen Stumpe
Donald Sullivan
William Surin
Julie Swanson Haggard
Art Swanson
Katherine Swise
Warren Sylvester
James Tabor
Kevin Thomas
Carrie Thompson
Maksim Tikhvinskiy
Kevin Tilton
Zachary Townsend

Free Legal Help at the Rockford Library

Lawyers in the Library! Prairie State Legal Services and the Rockford Public Library have partnered to present legal advice for residents of Rockford on Thursday, December 9, from 9:30-11:30 AM, at the Hart Interim Library, at 214 N. Church Street, in Meeting Room 1. A lawyer from Prairie State Legal Services will be onsite at the library for a one-on-one meeting.

Prairie State Legal Services can help in civil legal matters, including:

- Divorce
- Orders of Protection
- Evictions
- Housing Denials and Discrimination
- Guardianship
- Problems with SNAP, TANF
- Medicaid
- Criminal Record Expungement and Sealing
- Tax Problems
- Bankruptcy
- School Suspensions or Expulsions

Meetings may be scheduled ahead of time, by calling (815) 965-2902. Scheduled appointments will be prioritized. Walk-ins will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, please visit the Rockford Public Library events calendar at www.rockfordpubliclibrary.org.

www.pslegal.org
Strides for Justice
On Saturday, September 25, over 140 members of the Peoria community participated in the Peoria County Bar Association's Strides for Justice 5K and 1-mile run. This event, which is coordinated annually by the Fitness Health and Wellness Committee of the PCBA, was sponsored by 15 different law firms, companies, and individuals, and raised nearly $4,000 for Prairie State Legal Services.

With 11 offices that cover a 36-county service area, Anchor Advisors will be conducting a nationwide search for candidates, and the search committee hopes to assemble a list of applicants to interview by January 2022. The final hiring decision for the position is left up to Prairie State Legal Services' Board of Directors.

“Our next steps include a kick-off meeting with the search committee, which happened on November 11” said Stacy French-Reynolds of Anchor Advisors. “We will also gather information from a diverse group of Prairie State staff to ensure we have a robust understanding of what the local offices are facing. We will use the information gathered to write the job description, what we call a compelling marketing statement to attract candidates, and then begin posting.”

With 11 offices that cover a 36-county service area, Anchor Advisors will be conducting a nationwide search for candidates, and the search committee hopes to assemble a list of applicants to interview by January 2022. The final hiring decision for the position is left up to Prairie State Legal Services’ Board of Directors.

Prairie State Hires Firm for Executive Director Search
Prairie State has hired Stacy French-Reynolds of Anchor Advisors to identify candidates in its search to replace current Executive Director Mike O’Connor.

Stacy is a partner at Anchor Advisors, LLC and has helped more than 70 organizations during her 30-year career. Before she started consulting in 2004, Stacy was a successful fundraiser. She currently advises nonprofits in social services, law firms, and those with governance or advisory boards, and also leads executive recruiting. Stacy brings a strong background in leadership and management to the Anchor Advisors team. Her dynamic, non-judgmental, truth-telling style helps organizations cut through the noise to create the transformation they seek. Stacy earned a master’s degree in managerial communication from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, and a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI.

Stacy of Anchor Advisors was chosen out of three search firms Prairie State was considering, winning the contract over Patricia Pap of MIE, and Cory King and Megan Lewis of Kittleman & Associates.

Steven Greely, President of Prairie State’s Board of Directors, was named as the chair of the search committee, which has been meeting regularly after Executive Director Mike O’Connor announced his resignation in February 2022, this past September.

“"Our next steps include a kick-off meeting with the search committee, which happened on November 11” said Stacy French-Reynolds of Anchor Advisors. “We will also gather information from a diverse group of Prairie State staff to ensure we have a robust understanding of what the local offices are facing. We will use the information gathered to write the job description, what we call a compelling marketing statement to attract candidates, and then begin posting.”

With 11 offices that cover a 36-county service area, Anchor Advisors will be conducting a nationwide search for candidates, and the search committee hopes to assemble a list of applicants to interview by January 2022. The final hiring decision for the position is left up to Prairie State Legal Services’ Board of Directors.

Deborah Goldberg & Neil Puller | Law Offices of Lee and Wombacher | Dr. Danielle & John Kim
Fall Events Recap

After nearly two years of not meeting together in person to raise money for Prairie State Legal Services, several Campaign for Legal Services teams planned fantastic events for our communities. We are so grateful for the support of our CLS teams, our staff, our donors, and our volunteers! Here is a look at the events held this fall.

**Strides for Justice**
On Saturday, September 25, over 140 members of the Peoria community participated in the Peoria County Bar Association’s Strides for Justice 5K and 1-mile run. This event, which is coordinated annually by the Fitness Health and Wellness Committee of the PCBA, was sponsored by 15 different law firms, companies, and individuals, and raised nearly $4,000 for Prairie State Legal Services.

**Strike A Chord**
On Thursday, September 9, the community turned out in force at the beautiful Waukegan Harbor for Lake County’s 10th annual Strike A Chord for Prairie State Legal Services event. More than 100 colleagues, friends, family and community members listened to an amazing night of music, enjoyed food from Waukegan-based food truck “The Daily Special,” and raised $11,730.

**McHenry Lawyers for Justice**
On Thursday, October 21, the Woodstock Office held its 4th annual Lawyers for Justice Celebration at Niko’s Red Mill Tavern outdoor band shell in Woodstock. Heritage Title Company was the event sponsor and approximately 50 people came out to support Prairie State Legal Services while enjoying live outdoor music and raising approximately $4,500!

**Rockford Mix & Mingle**
On Thursday, November 2, the Rockford Campaign for Legal Services team hosted a mix and mingle event at the University Club of Rockford where guest bartenders, Shauna Gustafson and Robert Jones, served approximately 50 friends, staff, and supporters, while Executive Director Mike O’Connor played live music for everyone to enjoy. The evening raised nearly $1,000!

**100 Women Who Care of Naperville Choose Prairie State Legal Services as Beneficiary**
On August 18, 2021, as the Illinois eviction moratorium was quickly coming to an end, more than 100 women in Naperville committed to combating evictions and keeping people housed in DuPage County through civil legal services. The 100 Women Who Care of Naperville is a “Giving Circle of over 100 women who are passionate about making [their] community a better place for all.” Through their collective support, they provided Prairie State Legal Services with more than $18,450.
#GivingTuesday is right around the corner!
In 2016, we raised $17,000 for #GT. Only five years later, in 2020, we raised more than $93,000. That was thanks to supporters and friends like YOU! For 2021, we have set a goal to reach $100,000, but we need your help to get there! Here are some things that you can do to help:

- **Like us on social media**, share content, and invite your friends and family to like and follow us.
  - Facebook @PrairieStateLegalServices
  - Instagram @prairiestatelegalservices/instagram
  - Twitter @Prairie_State/Twitter
  - LinkedIn @prairiestatelegal
  - YouTube @PrairieStateLegal

- **Commit to creating a fundraiser on Facebook** (or other social media platform)! Will you help us by creating a Facebook fundraiser on behalf of Prairie State between November 23 and December 7? For every Facebook fundraiser created (up to 75), members of Prairie State’s management staff will donate an additional $23 to Prairie State!

- **New ideas?** Want to create a TikTok? Or attend a Twitchathon? #GT is a great day to utilize social media to further our mission.

- **Donate between November 23 and December 7!** You can give online at www.pslegal.org or mail your donation to 303 North Main Street, Suite 600, Rockford, IL 61101. The first $6,000 in donations will be matched by Board Member Deb Goldberg and Wintrust Corporation!