



# EQUAL ACCESS

A Newsletter of Prairie State Legal Services

## 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.*



**Adam Fleming**

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.



**Timothy Leighton**  
Bloomington



**Gary Mueller**  
Joliet



**Deanna Carlson-Webb**  
Kankakee



**Don Driscoll**  
Peoria/Galesburg



**Stephanie Ames**  
Rock Island



**Mike Bean**  
Telephone Counseling



**Rebecca Whitcombe**  
Waukegan

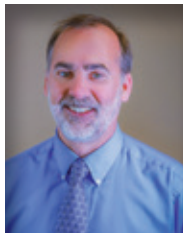


**Paula Rieghns**  
West Suburban



**Michelle Gehris**  
Woodstock

**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](http://www.youtube.com/prairiestatelegal).**



Michael O'Connor

## 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,

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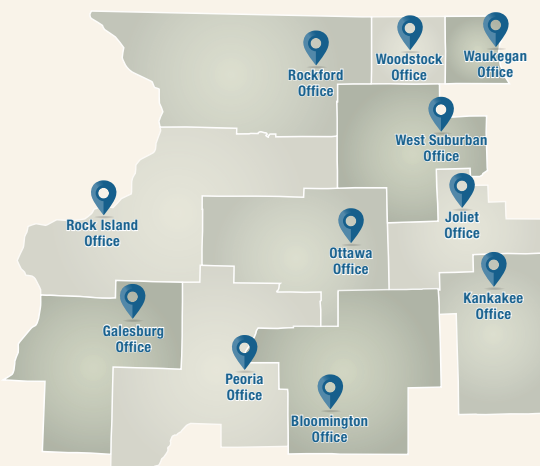
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Adam M. Fleming

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## 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 Awarded \$7,500 for Disabled Children's Program

Prairie State Legal Services was selected to receive a 2021 Community Needs Grant in the amount of \$7,500 from the Community Foundation of Central Illinois for our Disabled Children's Advocacy Program. Through this program, Prairie State represents abused, neglected, and disabled children who are being denied educational services. Children receive legal assistance in education and Social Security Disability cases to ensure the opportunity to succeed by receiving education in the proper setting and assistance in meeting their basic needs. Prairie State is one of the only legal aid organizations that covers the CFCI service area. Many of the children served through this program are referred from other child supportive service agencies in the area that are unable to provide for the child's legal needs. Thank you for your support, CFCI!

## 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.



**PURSuing JUSTICE. RESTORING HOPE.**

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*



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.

Eliot Abarbanel  
Anthony Abear  
Thomas Abram  
Candice Adams  
Sara Agate  
Nabeela Ahmed  
E. Julia Almeida  
Stephanie Ames  
Aiden Ammar  
Anthony Andreano  
Femarie Ang  
Gail Anstett-Patrick  
Elizabeth Arcot  
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Eileen Baker Dorchinecz  
Tomiko Ballard  
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James Bass  
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Rocio Becerril  
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Felice Bernstein  
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Elizabeth Bettag  
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David Black  
Brent Blair  
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David Del Re  
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Timothy Divis  
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Michael Fitzgerald  
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Adam Fleming  
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Carl Gilmore  
Kelly Girauda  
Kristin Givens  
Deborah Goldberg  
Lillian Gonzalez  
Tricia Goostree  
Gabrielle Gosselin  
Matthew Grob  
Bradley Groselak  
Victor Gryniowicz  
Michael Gulo  
Patricia Hall  
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Van Larson  
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Charity Murow  
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William North  
Lisa Nyuli  
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Helen Ogar  
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Anqunette Parham  
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June Peterson-Gleason  
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Jordan Sartell

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Brian Shoemaker  
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Maksim Tikhvinskiy  
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Zachary Townsend

Bridget Trainor  
Daniel Transier  
Seth Uphoff  
Thomas Vaclavek  
J. Brick Van Der Snick  
Carla van Dongen  
Alison Vawter  
Barbara Vella  
John Vickers  
Nils von Keudell  
Lisa Waggoner  
Sarah Walker Pauls  
C. David Ward  
Sharon Ware  
Kerriane Waters  
Rory Weiler  
Timother Weiler  
Catherine Wellman  
Rebecca Whitcombe  
Amanda Wielgus  
Scott Williams  
Rich Williams  
Christina Willman  
Adam Wirtz  
Kevin Wolfe  
Carin Wolkenberg  
William Wombacher  
Jeffrey Wood  
Gina Wood  
Sarah Woollen  
Kyle Worby  
Alexander Wright  
Alonzo Zahour  
Karen Zajicek  
Robin Zandri  
Brianna Zielke  
Richard Zuckerman

## 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](http://www.rockfordpubliclibrary.org).



# GIVING TUESDAY

Thank you to our 2021 #GivingTuesday Sponsors!



Deborah Goldberg & Neil Puller

Law Offices of Lee and Wombacher

Dr. Danielle & John Kim

## 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.



OWN YOUR COURSE.

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.



## 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!



## 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.



## 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.





PRAIRIE STATE  
LEGAL SERVICES

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# HELP US REACH \$100,000 ON GIVING TUESDAY

## NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup>

THANK YOU TO OUR  
2021 #GIVINGTUESDAY  
SPONSORS!

### #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](http://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!**