

The Catalyst

The newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association's Standing Committee on Women and the Law

Association of Women Attorneys of Lake County

BY DEANNA HOYT

On August 7, 2019, Anna Krolikowska, the ISBA second vice president, came to Lake County, Illinois, to join the Association of Women Attorneys of Lake County ("AWALC") at our monthly lunch at Potestas in Waukegan. Anna presented on the benefits of becoming an Illinois State Bar Association member and getting involved in the various committees, section counsels, and governing board.

The Association of Women Attorneys of Lake County has monthly lunch meetings at Potestas Pizza, at 434 S Green Bay Rd, Waukegan, IL 60085, at noon, on the first Wednesday of the month. AWALC's mission is to promote the harmonious practice of law, to provide opportunities for social interaction, to advance the professional education of its members and

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Getting to Know Jennifer Luczkowiak

BY MARGIE KOMES PUTZLER

"Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know. The truth is, no one knows it all and anyone who pretends to is lying."

Jennifer Luczkowiak is a new appointee to the ISBA's Women and the Law Committee. She has wanted to be an attorney for as long as she can remember. That dream became a reality in June 2008 when Jennifer graduated from University of California, Hastings College of the Law. Her desire to specialize in public interest law

solidified during her undergraduate studies at Northwestern University where she double majored in United States history and legal studies and minored in gender studies. Jennifer says she has always gravitated toward the issues of gender inequality, public interest law, and children's rights.

Jennifer's legal career began in California representing homeless and runaway youth as an Equal Justice Works Fellow at the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, and in 2011

she came back to her home state of Illinois. In 2012, her career with Prairie State Legal Services began as a staff attorney in the Legal Help for Homeowner's Project and in 2014, she became the project director. In July of 2016, she was promoted to her current position as director of development. She is based out of Waukegan, but serves Prairie State Legal Services' entire 36 county area from the Illinois/Wisconsin border to

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to provide public service to the community, especially families and women.

If anyone is ever in the Lake County area on the first Wednesday of the month, we would love for you to stop by and join us for lunch. Our speaker topics range from immigration issues to domestic violence awareness to unique issues facing incarcerated women. It's a great opportunity

to meet Judges and attorneys who practice in Lake County.

For more information about AWALC you can check out our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/AWALC2018/> or our website at <https://awalc.org/>. ■



Above: On August 7, 2019, Second Vice President Anna Krolikowska joined the Women Attorneys of Lake County for its monthly lunch.

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This is the newsletter of the ISBA's Standing Committee on Women & the Law. Section newsletters are free to section members and published at least four times per year. Section membership dues are \$30 per year. To subscribe, visit www.isba.org/sections or call 217-525-1760.

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The articles in this newsletter are not intended to be used and may not be relied on for penalty avoidance.

Getting to Know Jennifer Luczkowiak

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Bloomington and across the entire northern half of the state with the exception of Cook County.

To date, one of Jennifer's most rewarding experiences as a lawyer has been working with undocumented minors to get their citizenship by applying for special immigrant juvenile status. In these cases, children's lives are changed. A short video about one of her cases in California is online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiRsfrMA034>.

The biggest influences in Jennifer's life besides her husband (one of the greatest feminists she knows) are her mother and grandmother. They were hard workers who loved deeply and did not let setbacks keep them from moving forward. They both sought to provide opportunities for their children that were greater than the opportunities they had received.

Professionally, Jennifer admires Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Martin Luther King, Jr. They both faced immense adversity, but never let that stop them from standing up for what they believe in and from having an incredible impact on the world. When she is tired or worn out, she reminds herself that they wanted to give up at times too, but that their persistence paid off.

Jennifer's advice to new lawyers is: "Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know. The truth is, no one knows it all and anyone who pretends to is lying."

Prairie State Legal Services has many ways for lawyers to get involved. If you are able to donate your time, Prairie State always needs pro bono attorneys to help with cases—just email volunteer@pslegal.org. For those who like to network and plan events, Prairie State has local fundraising committees in each

of its offices that provide an opportunity for lawyers and other professionals to plan fundraising events, thank donors, or reach out to the community for additional financial support. People with musical abilities are invited to play at a local fundraising event, or if you have photography/videography skills, Prairie State welcomes your talents to help capture the need for Prairie State services and record case victories in a creative way. If nothing else, you can "like" or "follow" Prairie State Legal Services on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn and stay engaged through social media. ■

Margie Komes Putzler is an associate at Turner & Sackett LLC in Sycamore, IL, a firm that specializes in Personal Injury, Workers Compensation, and Wrongful Death Claims. She can be reached at 815-895-2131 or mkomes@turnersackett.com.

Kristen Prinz's 10-Year Firm Anniversary

BY ERIN WILSON

Our very own Kristen Prinz of The Prinz Law Firm—an employment law firm working with executives, professionals, and business owners—celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Kristen has been one of my biggest supporters in starting my firm so I turned the tables on her initial interview of me upon her exciting firm anniversary.

What did you do to celebrate your firm anniversary?

We had a large party at Chicago Club for clients, friends, family and the team, and we had an office outing to the River Walk. At least once a quarter, we plan an office outing (for example, this February, we did office yoga). I'm also giving myself a break, which is the hardest part of all. I want to prioritize my kids (my daughters are six and three) because my family is moving and we're going through some transition. I do have guilt though when I'm not as around in the office.

I really love my work and my team and hate to miss out on anything.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in your firm since its inception, outside of the obvious?

I have a great functioning team that works hard. I want to learn the individual goals of my employees and invest in them so they feel supported. No one teaches you to be a good boss, and typically you see and learn a lot of bad behavior, so I try to be very conscious of this and how I am as an employer. I started a podcast in 2017 where we talk about work "horror stories" with other working professionals. Through their tales, I have learned behavior to avoid.

The firm itself functions pretty smoothly because I have implemented different systems. This allows me to be less involved in more things in my firm, such as the marketing and client intakes.

What are your pieces of advice for a successful and growing firm?

I feel like I made so many mistakes, trying to anticipate things that did not end up happening, or hiring too soon. I look at my budget and pipeline, and I have to be really committed to the people in my firm. I know I will make less money in the short-term when hiring new people, but it's a good decision in the long-run if I think they will be good fit for the firm. By investing in my team, I am now able to step away from the office more often.

I also have total transparency with the finances of my firm. I let my employees see what is coming in and going out, and we work together to set the firm's goals. I invest in my firm as an office and the individuals that work for me. We have both a CLE and professional development budget, to show them that not only is

learning the law important but also growing as a businessperson. We have professional development as an office as well, so that everyone learns the skills for running a business. For example, another company will come to our office to provide business training to everyone in the firm.

What do you see as the vision for your firm's future?

It's important to add value to the clients, more than just knowing the law. We prioritize creating practical and pragmatic solutions to minimize our client's exposure and liability. This is why I want the firm to be doing professional development training in addition to the regular CLE that is required, so that everyone understands the practicalities of running a business. I also see

technology as really taking the front seat to the practice of law, and we are trying to be innovative in the tools we offer our clients.

I want to see my employees have bright futures, whether in my firm or not, depending on their individual goals. I want to help them get to where they want to be, whatever that is. I think what I'm really best at is learning what someone wants and helping them achieve that goal.

What has helped you achieve (or not) a "work-life balance"?

Learning to delegate. I talk to my children, especially my 6-year-old, asking if she feels I'm home enough. She told me recently, "You've been really busy, but that's okay because daddy has been home more. But you told me that you would be home two

nights and you were only home one night." I learned from that it's not about when you are or are not home, but being committed to your word. I do try to set boundaries and limit the nights I'm at networking events. However, I am learning to be careful with my language. I don't say, "I have to go pick up my kids," or "I have to go to this event." I say, "I want to go, or I committed to go." I do enjoy my family and also enjoy working so it's striking that balance where I can get done as much as possible that is important to me. ■

Title IX at 47: A Brother's Reflections on an Olympic Gymnast, a Track Pioneer, and a Nike Executive

BY JOHN E. THIES

What do you call the brother of three sisters including an Olympic gymnast, a pioneering track athlete at a Big Ten university, and a state qualifying tennis player (now Nike executive)? For me, it means a lawyer who has witnessed first-hand some of the ups and downs associated with Title IX.¹ This landmark legislation turns 47 this year, giving me pause to reflect on some of my sisters' experiences—positive and negative—associated with Title IX.

Title IX, passed in 1972, states that:

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Both private and public institutions are

governed by Title IX regulations, and this has affected most colleges, universities, as well as state and local educational institutions due to their receipt of federal assistance. According to the United States Department of Education, "[t]hese agencies include approximately 16,500 local school districts, 7,000 postsecondary institutions, as well as charter schools, for-profit schools, libraries, and museums. Also included are vocational rehabilitation agencies and education agencies of 50 states, the District of Columbia, and territories and possessions of the United States." While Title IX was intended to expand opportunities for women and girls in a wide range of areas, much of the public focus on this law has been with regard to athletics.

My sister **Nancy Thies Marshall** was a member of the 1972 United States Olympic

Gymnastics Team that competed in Munich. In the course of that competition, Nancy—who was 15 years old at the time—successfully completed the first back summersault on the balance beam in Olympic history. During her four years on the U.S. National team, she was a national champion in two events and competed all over the world. Ultimately, Nancy was inducted into the World Acrobatics Hall of Fame (among her many other recognitions).

Despite her significant prior achievements in the sport, when Nancy entered the University of Illinois (U of I) in the fall of 1975 and became a member of the school's women's gymnastics team, she was given only a *partial* athletic scholarship. Instead of receiving a full one, she was informed by the athletic department that, unlike the hundreds of male athletes with inferior

credentials, she would have to “prove herself” before receiving this level of aid. The administrator who made this proclamation (incidentally, a woman) had a background as a physical education instructor.

Unbelievable as this story may read, it exhibits several “growing pains” that followed Title IX’s enacting. First, Title IX didn’t result in instantaneous practical reforms—it would be years before we would see the greater parity that exists today amongst men’s and women’s college sports programs. Second, it’s a window on the need at the time for women’s programs to shift from a model that was more focused on teaching people how to be *physically fit* to one that emphasized competition at the highest levels and which created pathways for athletes to do this.

Nancy clearly did “prove” her worth to the university. During the two years she competed at the U of I prior to her retirement from the sport to join NBC Sports as its gymnastics commentator, she won nine Big Ten individual titles, led the school to two Big Ten team titles and was the school’s first female Athlete of the Year. Ultimately, Nancy was included in the first class of athletes—male and female—inducted into the U of I Athletics Hall of Fame, joining Dick Butkus and other Illinois sports luminaries. To her, the growing pains of Title IX presented just one more hurdle to overcome. But, at least she had a varsity college sport to begin with (albeit one that didn’t deem her worthy of a full scholarship until her sophomore year!), a rarity for women on prior U.S. National teams.

My sister **Susie Thies Harrison** had a different but also significant experience with Title IX implications. When she arrived at Indiana University (IU) as a freshman in 1976, there was no varsity women’s track and cross country program. IU had a distinguished varsity men’s program in these sports (one I participated in as an athlete five years later), but the school had to date been unwilling to extend this status to women. Accordingly, when she got to campus, Susie became a “club team” athlete and went to work trying to persuade athletic department officials that varsity programs should be established.

To make her case, Susie worked with

another club team member to prepare an exhaustive review of the costs and benefits of such programs; the success of the IU club team members; and the talented athletes already available to represent the school.

After much persistence, the IU Athletic Department eventually relented and established varsity track and cross country for women beginning in 1978 crediting Susie and her teammate for the role they played in this achievement. I have little doubt that the existence of Title IX (and the tool it provided to potential litigants) played a role.

Our younger sister **Anne Thies Peters** has also been impacted by Title IX, but given her age (she is nine years younger than Nancy and eight years younger than Susie), her experience was less direct, but equally important. Thanks to Title IX, Anne entered high school with a wide range of athletic opportunities (she chose tennis, where she qualified for the Illinois State Meet three times) and had many options if she had wanted to compete in college. For a young woman interested in participating in organized sports, there was a big difference between being born in 1957 (like Nancy) and 1966 (like Anne).

Anne’s most direct connection to Title IX may be how it is affecting her now. Anne is an executive with Nike in Oregon; she travels across a globe where it is difficult to find a place where women (and girls) are not wearing Nike shoes and gear competing in them at the highest levels. I would venture to say that these markets—in the U.S. and beyond—experienced *billions* of dollars in expansion due to Title IX.

In the sports arena, Title IX has been far from perfect. To begin with, many men’s sports teams have been eliminated throughout the country in order to achieve greater parity. It is ironic that a law designed to advance opportunity for many, has taken it away from more than a few—a significant culprit of this at the collegiate level has been men’s football with its hundreds of scholarships. This particular problem is one worth fixing. But in the interim, no one can dispute that Title IX has led to enormous advancement in the engagement of women and girls in tremendously fulfilling athletic and other pursuits—a *very* good thing. And

in reflecting back, I have been an up-close witness as a proud brother to a share of this. ■

John E. Thies is a past president of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) and practices with the Champaign-Urbana law firm, Webber & Thies P.C. concentrating in the areas of general litigation and business representation where he can be reached at jthies@webberthies.com. He is the current president of Land of Lincoln Legal Aid, which serves low income individuals and seniors in the southern 65 counties in Illinois.

1. To paraphrase an old joke, some would also say a “feminist.”
2. 20 U.S.C. A § 1681(a) (1972).
3. http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html.