

Welcome New KLS Executive Director, Matt Keenan



Matthew Keenan, New Executive Director of Kansas Legal Services (KLS)

Welcome Matthew Keenan as the new Executive Director of Kansas Legal Services (KLS) as of January 1, 2023. Keenan, as a longtime partner of Shook, Hardy, & Bacon, LLP, advocated for global clients as part of renowned Product Liability Litigation Practice. Now Keenan will lead the nonprofit organization that provides equal access to justice for low-income Kansans across the state's 105 counties.

"I have benefitted from a firm culture and history of a strong commitment to social justice and civil legal aid," said Keenan.

Shook, Hardy & Bacon has a long history of handling highly visible pro bono cases including representing the family of Nancy Cruzan in a "right to die" case which went

all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

More recently, Shook reached an important milestone as part of its commitment to serve children and families. The Kansas Foster and Adoptive Children Scholarship Fund, founded by Shook, reached \$1 million in scholarships awarded since the program began in 2001. Kansas high school students formerly in the foster care system are able to receive scholarships for university, college and trade schools. The program continues to this day.

Keenan has been active in pro bono causes for much of his legal career including serving on the board of directors for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) since 2019. The LSC is the single largest provider of civil legal assistance for low-income people in the nation.

Keenan acted as chair of Shook's Pro Bono Committee for eight years with a particular focus on adoptions in Kansas and veterans' issues. Twice he has earned Shook's William G. Zimmerman Pro Bono Award as well as the Outstanding Service Award from the Kansas Bar.

While his new role will be as administrator overseeing 135 staff, including 50 attorneys, and 11 offices, he will handle his own pro bono cases while encouraging private law firms and lawyers to get involved with helping those who need legal services the most.

"When I got involved taking cases for those who can't afford an attorney, and certainly not a BigLaw attorney, I never realized that the life I would be changing would be my own," said Keenan.

Keenan earned his law degree from the University of Kansas School of Law and his undergraduate degree from the University of Kansas. Former KLS Executive Director Marilyn Harp retired after 17 years as director, and 43 years with KLS.

"I have a vision for KLS," said Keenan. "They have a very dedicated and talented team, and I look forward to helping them carry out their mission. It's my next chapter of what has been a very rewarding career."

Last updated on January 26, 2023.

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