

# Press Release



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN  
*Leaders in the Law. Advocates for Justice.®*

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14, 2025

Contact: [Mike Wiltse](#), PR Manager

608-250-6025

## Milwaukee legal advocate Rhonda Van Pembroke posthumously honored with statewide public interest award

MADISON, Wis.—Rhonda Van Pembroke, a dedicated advocate for low-income communities and former Aurora resident, has been posthumously honored with the [State Bar of Wisconsin's](#) Ryan Klesh Outstanding Public Interest Legal Worker Award.

The award, granted by the State Bar's Public Interest Law Section, is named in honor of the late Ryan Klesh and recognizes individuals who embody selflessness, work ethic, kindness, intellect, authenticity, and humor in seeking justice for underserved populations.

The award recognizes individuals who exemplify the spirit of public service through selflessness, compassion, and commitment to justice—traits that defined Van Pembroke's more than 30-year career with Legal Action of Wisconsin.

Colleagues at Legal Action remember her as a steadfast presence, known for her legendary work ethic, deep empathy, and unwavering commitment to her clients and community. Van Pembroke passed away on November 6, 2024, following a courageous battle with ovarian cancer.

"Rhonda embodied the very best of what it means to serve others," said a colleague. "Her legacy lives on through the countless lives she touched and the values she upheld every day."

Van Pembroke began her legal career in Milwaukee in 1990, using her warmth, intellect, and bilingual skills to help clients access essential public benefits, including food, housing, childcare, and health care. Her advocacy didn't end at the office: she was an active volunteer through her church and worked with local justice-driven initiatives including the Food, Faith and Farming Network and MICA (Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope).

The Ryan Klesh Award is named after another former Legal Action of Wisconsin staffer whose legacy of authenticity, humor, and service left a lasting mark on public interest law in Wisconsin.

# # #

**Photo attached:** Rhonda Van Pembroke is the posthumous recipient of the 2025 Ryan Klesh Outstanding Public Interest Legal Worker Award from the State Bar of Wisconsin.

## ABOUT THE STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

The State Bar of Wisconsin is the integrated professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 25,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its



Rhonda Van Pembroke dedicated more than 30 years to serving low-income communities as a paralegal with Legal Action of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. She was posthumously honored with the State Bar of Wisconsin's Ryan Klesh Outstanding Public Interest Legal Worker Award for her unwavering commitment to justice, compassion, and community service.. (Photo courtesy of the State Bar of Wisconsin)

members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit [www.wisbar.org](http://www.wisbar.org).