

THE ELECTION IS OVER! NOW WHAT?

ADAM WOODS, SELF-ADVOCATE

PHIL MILSK, J.D.

DR. SUSY WOODS, ILLINOIS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

ITS BEEN AN
EXHAUSTING FEW
MONTHS!

WE'VE LISTENED AND LISTENED AND
LISTENED!

WE'VE THOUGHT ABOUT ALL POINTS OF
VIEWS

WE'VE SEEN AND HEARD MORE POLITICAL
COMMERCIALS THAN WE EVER WANTED TO.

BUT ITS OVER AND WE'RE EITHER VERY
HAPPY OR VERY NOT HAPPY!!!!!!



AND THE WINNER IS:

JOE BIDEN HAS BEEN DECLARED THE WINNER.

HOWEVER DONALD TRUMP HAS NOT YET CONCEDED.

THIS WAS ONE OF THE UGLIEST ELECTIONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

HOWEVER IT IS OVER AND WE NEED TO START COMING BACK TOGETHER AS A COUNTRY,



WHY DO WE VOTE THE WAY WE DO?

MANY THINGS FORM US TO VOTE AS WE DO.

SOMETIMES WE WERE RAISED IN A CERTAIN POLITICAL PARTY. MY MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER WERE BLUE DOG DEMOCRATS WHICH MEANT THEY WOULD VOTE FOR A BLUE DOG BEFORE A REPUBLICAN.

I STUDY BOTH SIDES AND ASK QUESTIONS AND READ TO SEE WHICH CANDIDATE MOST CAREFULLY ALIGNS WHERE I AM AND WHAT MY CONCERNS ARE.

WE MAY HAVE SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO US AND THAT CAN BE WHY WE VOTE FOR ONE CANDIDATE AND NOT ANOTHER.



WHAT DO WE SHARE?

I THINK ALL OF US HERE NO MATTER WHERE WE ARE FROM IN THE STATE SHARE ONE ISSUE:

WE CARE ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND WANT TO MAKE THINGS BETTER AND EQUAL FOR THEM SO WHEN WE LOOK AT CANDIDATES FOR ANY OFFICE THAT IS ONE AREA THAT MIGHT BE VERY IMPORTANT TO US.

DISABILITY IS THE ONLY MINORITY THAT YOU CAN BECOME A PART OF AT ANY MINUTE.

YOU CAN BE BORN WITH A DISABILITY

YOU CAN ACQUIRE A DISABILITY

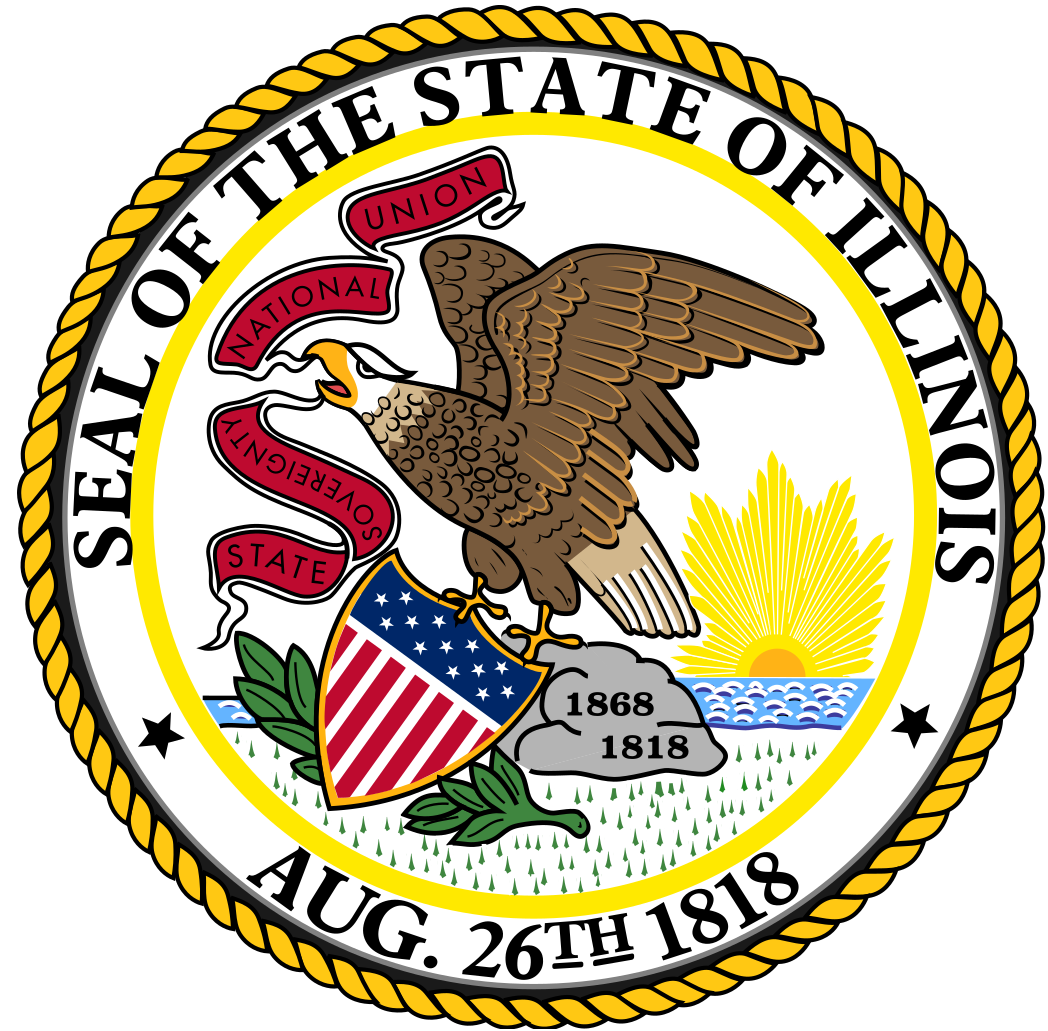
OR YOU CAN HAVE A DISABILITY JUST BECAUSE OF THE AGING PROCESS.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

PART OF OUR JOB AS ADVOCATES IS TO
EDUCATE PEOPLE IN POWER TO :

1. UNDERSTAND DISABILITY
2. UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES WE FACE
3. UNDERSTAND WHAT WE NEED FROM
OUR LEGISLATORS
4. UNDERSTAND WHAT WE CAN DO TO
HELP THEM BETTER UNDERSTAND.



WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE? AND IS THAT A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING?

ADVOCATE SIMPLY MEANS 'USING YOUR
VOICE'

WE DO THIS EVERY DAY: 'I WANT COFFEE
AND NOT TEA.'

'I WANT TO GO BOWLING AND NOT
SWIMMING.'

THINK OF THE WIZARD OF OZ AND THE
QUESTION 'ARE YOU A GOOD WITCH OR A
BAD WITCH?' AND DORTHY'S ANSWER!

'IM NOT ANY KIND OF WITCH AT ALL'



WHEN YOU HEAR ADVOCATE WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?

1. Someone who pleads a cause like a teenager who wants to use the family car
2. Someone who pleads the cause of another like an attorney
3. Someone who publicly supports a particular cause of policy like the people who advocate for disability rights and legislation
4. 3 types of advocacy: self-advocacy, individual advocacy, systems advocacy
5. Other words for advocate: supporter, spokesman, pioneer, reformer



THINGS THAT HAVE CHANGED BECAUSE OF ADVOCACY:

1. WOMEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE
2. WE ARE NO LONGER A SEGREGATED COUNTRY WITH SEPARATE SCHOOLS OR WATER FOUNTAINS OR HAVING TO SIT IN THE BACK OF THE BUS BECAUSE OF COLOR.
3. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE SEEN AS A VOTING BLOC TO BE HEARD WITH THE PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION SUCH AS THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
4. YOU CAN MARRY THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE



SO WHERE DO WE START?

WE START WHERE WE ARE WITH WHAT WE HAVE.

I HOPE YOU VOTED THIS YEAR. OUR FAMILY ALL VOTED EARLY. PHILS FAMILY VOTED BY MAIL. WE ARE LUCKIER IN ILLINOIS THAN IN SOME STATES BECAUSE OUR VOTING PROCESS WAS PRETTY SEAMLESS. IN MISSOURI YOU HAD TO HAVE YOUR BALLOT NOTARIZED IF YOU VOTED BY MAIL WHICH COSTS MONEY AND LEAVES PEOPLE OUT WHO MIGHT WANT TO DO THIS.

MY SON ADAM HAS BEEN VOTING SINCE HE WAS 18. HE IS GOING TO SHARE ONE OF HIS EXPERIENCES.



ADAMS VOTING STORY:

MY MOM ALWAYS WANTED ME TO WAIT AND GO WITH HER TO VOTE. BUT ONE TIME SHE WAS VERY SLOW GETTING HOME AND SO I JUST WENT WITHOUT HER AND VOTED.

WHEN SHE GOT HOME SHE ASKED ME HOW I KNEW WHOM TO VOTE FOR. I TOLD HER IT WAS EASY. I MEMORIZED THE NUMBERS NEXT TO THE NAMES OF THE PEOPLE I WAS VOTING FOR AND SO TOM RYDER WAS OUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND SO I VOTED FOR NUMBER 22 TOM RYDER. AND HE WON.

And for the whole time Tom Ryder was our legislator he remembered that story and Adam.



SO AFTER THE ELECTION THEN WHAT?

THE ELECTION IS IMPORTANT BUT AFTER IT IS OVER WE STILL HAVE IMPORTANT WORK TO DO.

IF YOU HAVE THE SAME LEGISLATORS AND YOU KNOW THEM, CONTACT THEM IN SOME WAY TO CONGRATULATE THEM IF THEY WON AND REMIND THEM WHO YOU ARE.

IF YOU HAVE NEW LEGISLATORS CONTACT THEM AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF. TELL THEM WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOUR CONCERNS ARE AND IF POSSIBLE MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO MEET THEM OR TALK WITH THEM. RIGHT NOW WITH COVID THAT MIGHT HAVE TO BE THROUGH EMAIL OR PHONE.

JUST FYI: IT'S ALWAYS EASIER TO GET HOLD OF STATE LEGISLATORS THAN FEDERAL ONES BUT THE FEDERAL ONES HAVE GREAT STAFF YOU CAN FORGE A RELATION WITH.



WHERE TO START

FIRST WE HAVE TO LOOK AT WHERE WE ARE
AND WHERE ARE STRENGTHS LIE.

WHAT ARE WE GOOD AT?

SOME OF US CAN TALK AND OFTEN CAN
MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY TELLING UR
PERSONAL STORY.

SOME OF US CAN WRITE.

SOME OF US CAN SUPPORT OTHERS BY
DRIVING THEM TO PLACES TO TALK OR MEET
WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE OR BY HELPING
THEM WRITE LETTERS.

WE NEED TO FIND WHAT WE ARE GOOD AT,
WHAT WE HAVE THE TIME TO DO, AND
WHAT WE ARE COMFORTABLE DOING.



AND SOMETIMES....

WE HAVE TO STEP OUTSIDE OUR COMFORT ZONE WHEN WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT SOMETHING.

WE OFTEN DO NOT REALIZE WE HAVE THE TALENTS WE HAVE. I WAS EXTREMELY QUIET AND SHY IN SCHOOL BUT HAVING ADAM MADE ME DISCOVER MY VOICE AND I DID HAVE A VOICE I NEVER DREAMED I HAD.

WE CANT DO EVERYTHING ALL THE TIME BUT WHEN WE FIND SOMETHING WE NEED TO DO AND SPEAK UP ABOUT WE MAY ALSO FIND WE ARE MUCH MORE ABLE TO DO THAT THAN WE THOUGHT.



FIVE KEYS TO WHAT WE NEED TO DO:

KEY ONE:

START WHERE YOU ARE AND THINK ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

KEY TWO: THINK ABOUT WHERE YOU CAN BEST HELP. THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG HERE.

KEY THREE: WHO NEEDS TO BE AT THE TABLE TO GET THINGS DONE? WHO DO YOU KNOW THAT COULD HELP IF THIS IS A DISABILITY ISSUE DON'T JUST LOOK AT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

KEY FOUR: IS THIS A CITY, STATE, OR FEDERAL ISSUE? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE CHANGED?

KEY FIVE: WHO NEEDS TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION TO CHANGE THINGS.



KEY ONE: START WHERE YOU ARE AND DECIDE WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

WHO DOES IT IMPACT?

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO CHANGE THINGS?

HYPOTHETICAL ISSUE:

THERE IS NO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION WHERE I LIVE. I DON'T DRIVE AND TAKING UBER IS PRICEY.

WE NEED SOME FORM OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION BECAUSE WORK AND HAVING HOME ARE PART OF LIFE.



KEY TWO: WHERE CAN YOU HELP BEST?

PROBLEM IS LACK OF PUBLIC TRANS.

IS THERE SOMETHING YOU CAN SPEAK
ABOUT PERSONALLY?

CAN YOU WRITE A LETTER?

CAN YOU TALK TO SOMEONE ON THE
PHONE?

CAN YOU ATTEND A MEETING ABOUT THIS
OR DRIVE OTHER PEOPLE TO THE MEETING?

CAN YOU FIND PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY
WHO WILL SPEAK ON THIS TOPIC?



Meeting

KEY THREE: WHO NEEDS TO BE AT THE MEETING TO GET THINGS STARTED?

IS PUBLIC TRANS A DISABILITY ISSUE OR IS IT AN ISSUES FOR EVERYONE?

EVEN IF IT HURTS MORE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IT IS ALSO HARD FOR THEIR FAMILIES IF THEY HAVE TO DRIVE THEM EVERYWHERE.

IS THIS A CITY ISSUE? WHILE THAT IS A GOOD PLACE TO START COULD WE LOOK BROADER TO COUNTY OR EVEN STATE SO THIS IS EQUATIBLE FOR EVERYONE?

WHO COULD OUR ALLIES BE? SOMEONE ON CITY COUNCIL? THE MAYOR OR SOMEONE ELSE? YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR?



KEY FOUR: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE CHANGED?

THIS IS ABOUT TRANSPORTATION SO WHAT NEEDS CHANGED DEPENDS ON WHERE YOUR AREA IS WITH THINGS.

DO YOU HAVE ANY PUBLIC TRANS?

DO YOU ONLY HAVE THINGS LIKE TAXIS OR UBER.....BOTH SOMEWHAT EXPENSIVE.

DO PEOPLE IN POWER UNDERSTAND HOW NO PUBLIC TRANS IMPACTS PEOPLE IN MANY WAYS INCLUDING BEING ABLE TO WORK, BEING ABLE TO BE INDEPENDENT, BEING ABLE TO ACCESS WHAT YOU NEED SO YOU ARE ON A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD WITH OTHER PEOPLE



KEY FIVE: WHO HAS TO BE AT THE TABLE TO COME UP WITH A SOLUTION?

PEOPLE THAT ABSOLUTELY NEED TO BE PART OF THIS INCLUDE:

PEOPLE IMPACTED SUCH AS THE PERSON WITH A DISABILITY WHO DEPENDS ON THIS

THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS WHO MAY BE TRANSPORTING THEM AT GREAT COST

ANYONE WITH DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY SUCH AS THE MAYOR, COUNCIL MEMBERS, THE LEGISLATORS.

TWO OTHER GROUPS TO THINK ABOUT:

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF TO ANYONE SUCH AS THE MAYOR OR LEGISLATOR. THEY CAN GET THEIR EAR QUICKER THAN ANYONE.

FRIENDLY NEWSPAPER PEOPLE IN YOUR TOWN WHO CAN WRITE AN ARTICLE ADDRESSING THE ISSUE.



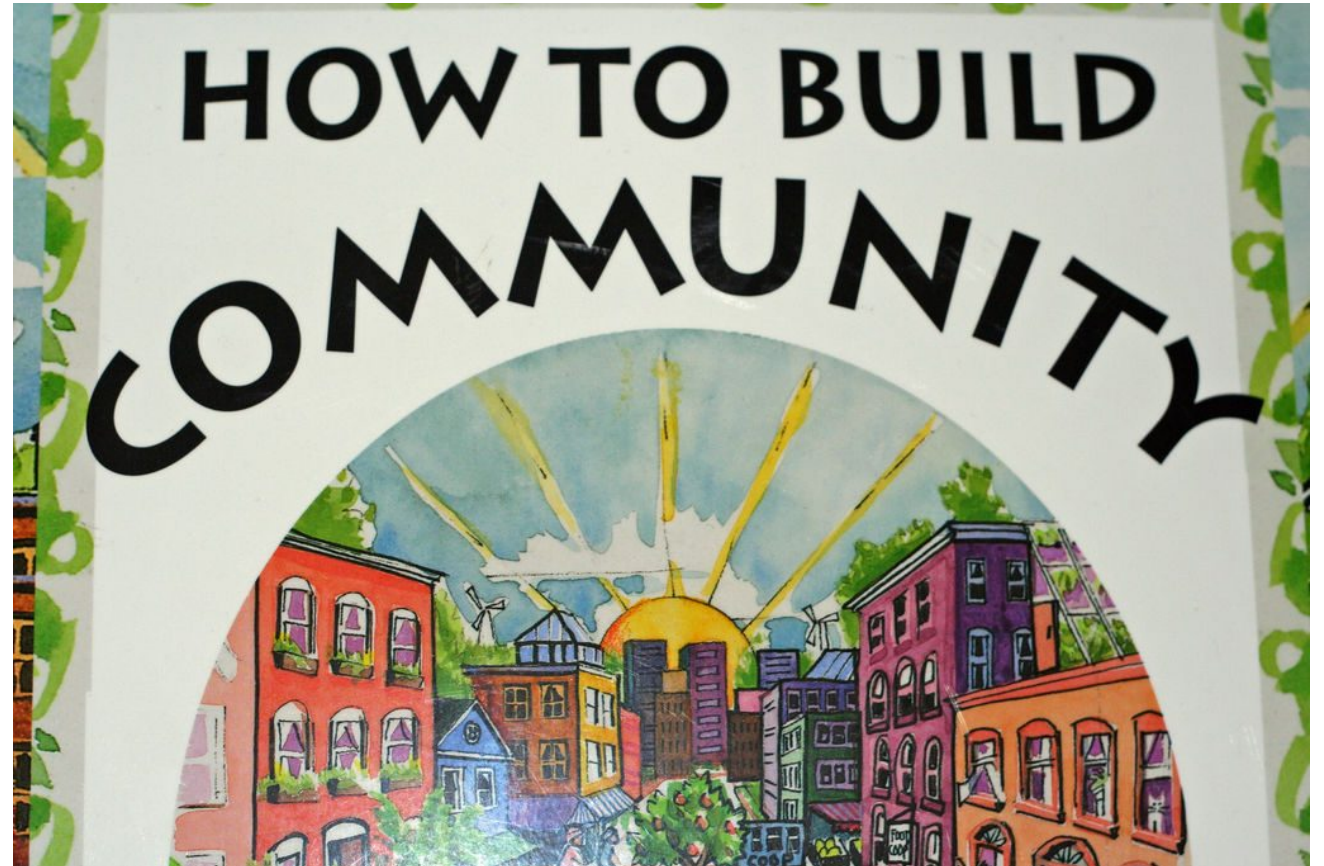
KEEP IN MIND:

EVEN IF EVERYONE YOU WANTED TO BE ELECTED IS THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY KNOW AND UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU NEED.

THEIR HANDS ARE TIED BY MANY THINGS INCLUDING BUDGET AND OTHER PRIORITIES SO WE ALWAYS HAVE TO WORK TO EDUCATE AND HELP THEM UNDERSTAND OUR ISSUES.

THEY NEED TO ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE A VOTING BLOCK AND WE ARE LARGE ENOUGH NATION WIDE TO WEILD POWER.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY WHEN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE ALL THE RIGHTS OTHER CITIZENS DO THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE WORKING AND PAY TAXES AND AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR COMMUNITY.



ADVOCACY=COMMUNICATION

THREE THINGS TO AVOID:

1. ADVOCACY DOESN'T MEAN CONFRONTATION. YOU DON'T NEED TO GET IN PEOPLES FACES AND SCREAM TO SHARE YOUR POINT.
2. ADVOCACY DOESN'T MEAN TELLING THEM WHAT YOU THINK THEY WANT TO HEAR. BE HONEST ALWAYS AND IF YOU DON'T KNOW SOMETHING THEY ASK TELL THEM YOU WILL FIND OUT. IT IS BETTER TO SAY I DON'T KNOW THEN TO LIE.
3. ADVOCACY ISNT LOBBYING. LEGISLATORS ARE USED TO HEARING LOBBYISTS TALK ABOUT CERTAIN BILLS. HOWEVER THEY ARE EXTREMELY RESPONSIVE WHEN THEIR CONSTITUENTS COME TO THEM EITHER IN PERSON OR THROUGH EMAIL OR PHONE CALLS TO LET THEM KNOW HOW PARTICULAR ISSUES ARE IMPACTING THEIR LIVES. THEIR CONSTITUENTS VOTE FOR THEM AND THOSE ARE THE PEOPLE THEY RESPOND TO.



NOW THAT THE ELECTION IS DONE WE ARE STARTING OUR REAL WORK!

3 TIPS AS YOU BEGIN OR CONTINUE:

1. IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR IN WHATEVER CONTEXT GET TO KNOW THEM. IT IS SO MUCH EASIER TO APPROACH THEM WITH CONCERNS IF YOU HAVE MET THEM IN THE PAST. EVEN IF THEIR BELIEFS ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOURS, THANK THEM FOR THEIR WORK AND TELL THEM YOU ARE THERE TO WORK WITH THEM.
2. SHARE RESOURCES AND WHAT YOU KNOW WITH THEM. OFFER TO BE A RESOURCE FOR THEM IN PARTICULAR ISSUES.
3. REALIZE THAT YOUR ISSUES IMPACT PEOPLES DAY TO DAY LIVES AS OPPOSED TO POLITICAL ISSUES WHICH ARE A BACK AND FORTH WAY TO WIN A CAMPAIGN AND DON'T ALWAYS HAVE REAL MEANING FOR DAY TO DAY STRUGGLES.



ISSUES OFTEN=BILLS AND/OR LEGISLATION

PHIL IS GOING TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE
LEGISLATION WE HAVE WORKED ON IN THE
PAST AS WELL AS TALK ABOUT SOME OF THE
CHALLENGES WE WILL FACE IN THE FUTURE.



AND TO CLOSE WITH DR SUESS:

THE GRINCH LEAVES US WITH HIS NEWLY
LEARNED IDEAS ABOUT LIFE AND CONFLICT
RESOLUTION:

“IT CAME WITHOUT RIBBONS

IT CAME WITHOUT TIES

IT CAME WITHOUT BOXES, BASKETS OR
BAGS.

MAYBE CHRISTMAS (HE THOUGHT) DOESN'T
COME FROM A STORE.

MAYBE CHRISTMAS MEANS

A LITTLE BIT MORE”



CONTACT INFORMATION:

PHIL MILSK, J.D.

PHILMILSK@AOL.COM

DR. SUSY WOODS, EDUCATION AND POLICY
ILLININOIS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
PROGRAM

SWOODS@ILTECH.ORG OR 217-638-8411

ADAM WOODS, SELF-ADVOCATE

618-944-3094

