



Who Do You Play For?

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The new year has kicked off with a bang. It seems impossible, but here we are, already midway into the first quarter.

The flurry of activity that happens after the holidays seems to sneak up on us every year. We come out of the lull of the holidays, briefly enchanted by a false sense of stillness, only to discover the mound of to-do lists and project deadlines that have been piling up.

But that's life, isn't it? Rapidly moving, gaining momentum with each passing year. And as we get older, it seems like every day, the need to make our mark grows stronger.

This isn't just true of us as individuals, but as organizations, too. We all have a purpose - a mission - that we're trying to fulfill. And our ability to fulfill that mission grows stronger when we come together and collectively work toward a common goal.

The worst-kept secret in the nonprofit world is that we're all trying to work ourselves out of a job. It would be great if tomorrow, I woke up and there no longer were any people struggling in need of an attorney who couldn't afford one. It would be wonderful to walk into my office tomorrow and be told that domestic violence had been completely eradicated from our society, that no one in our community was at risk of homelessness, and that children no longer needed special education services in school.

I would gladly pack up my bags and head home. We all know that's a fantasy.

Still, it's important to have your eye on that prize, to know what it is you're working toward and why you get out of bed every morning.

At Community Legal Aid, our vision of the world we're striving for is one where every individual, regardless of their status, financial standing, race, ethnicity, gender, religion - everyone in our society have the same opportunities to control, improve, and enrich their lives and the communities in which they live.

Just as important as knowing your vision is knowing

you have people working toward it alongside you.

One of my all-time favorite movies is the 2004 American sports docudrama *Miracle*, which chronicles the unlikely journey to gold of the 1980 U.S. Olympic Men's hockey team. The team was made up of the best amateur college players from across the country but they would be playing against other teams, especially the Soviet team, which were amateur in name only.

But these college kids were not really a team. They were rivals from different colleges. When head coach Herb Brooks asks the players to state their names and who they play for, each proudly states their name and college. They were each serving their own mission and goals.

There's an iconic scene in the movie, where Herb, frustrated with his guys after a terrible performance in a scrimmage game, keeps them after the game to do drills - to the point of absolute exhaustion. As you squirm in your seat as Herb calls out "again" over and over as the players skate up and down the ice, Mike Eruzione, who would go on to be team captain and score the winning goal in the game against the Soviet Union, cries out his name. Herb looks him in the eye and says "Who do you play for?" Mike shouts out "The United States of America!"

And in that moment they became a team that could accomplish a miracle. It is a powerful message that transcends the movies and the world of sports -- that we are collectively better, stronger, more capable together than we could ever be on our own. And when bound by a common mission and goal, a common vision for what the world could be, there's nothing more powerful than that bond.

So as we continue to embark on this new decade, I encourage you to ask yourself: Who do you play for? What are you working toward. What is your vision of the world?

And if it's one of fairness and equality and justice, I hope you'll continue or join alongside us - as a friend, a partner, a volunteer, a donor, an advocate. Because together, we are going to achieve great things.

