



2021 Distinguished Citizen Award

James L. Alexander

Attorney & Philanthropic Leader

A fourth-generation attorney, Jim Alexander comes from a family that has lived, worked, and prospered in Chicago since the 1830's. Part of that family's tradition has been a passionate commitment to social justice, civic engagement, education, and arts and culture; Alexander's great, great grandfather and great grandfather were radical abolitionists, and his grandmother was a suffragette. After earning in 1975 his M.A. in history at the University of Virginia, Alexander received a J.D. from Washington University in St. Louis. Following service as a Cook County Assistant States Attorney, Alexander joined the Chicago law firm of Ashcraft & Ashcraft, which his great-grandfather founded in the 1880's.



In 1982 Alexander partnered with his father, William H. Alexander, in forming Alexander & Alexander, where Jim continues to practice, specializing in estate planning and non-profit law. One of the most exciting, and totally unexpected, outcomes from deciding to practice law with his well-known and formidable father, no easy decision for any child, was the opportunity in 1992 to play a role in establishing The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust and Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust. As the second individual Co-trustee of the Morse and Genius Trusts, Alexander has been fortunate to work with corporate Co-trustees JPMorgan Chase Bank and Bank of America on a wide variety of philanthropic endeavors, including the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Dominican University, the Burnham Centennial, The LGBT Community Fund at The Chicago Community Trust, the Chicago History Museum, and the Diversity Working Group, which led to the creation of The Chicago High School for the Arts.

A past and present member of a number of Chicago non-profit boards, Alexander currently is a Vice President of Lyric Opera, Chair Emeritus of the Harris Theater for

Music and Dance and the Chicago History Museum, and a member of the advisory council for the Illinois Justice Project. Jim's father, William H. Alexander received Chicago Scots Distinguished Citizen Award in 1995. Jim has been involved at the Society since that time.