

GOING

GREEN



## for Glen Ellyn

By Patty Cavanagh

Glen Ellyn Moms Village loves showcasing moms in our community who are making a difference and an impact. Jacquelyn Casazza is doing exactly that! You may have met or heard of her through one of her many community projects that support her passion for living a clean and green life.

I first heard of her through her Facebook Group called Clean and Green with Jac. Then she founded Go Green Glen Ellyn, and she is on the board of the community-owned Prairie Food Co-op that is coming to Lombard. I am excited for you to get to know Jacquelyn.

**Tell us a little bit about yourself, your family, and your background.**

My name is Jacquelyn Casazza, but you can call me Jac! I grew up in Naperville, and my husband, Justin, grew up in Evanston. We met at work way back in 2002 and mostly lived in the city until we moved to Glen Ellyn in July 2017.





We have two energetic boys, Will (10) and Patrick (8), as well as two black cats, Rookie and Coco.

connecting moms to the community

I attended Vanderbilt University and, after that, spent over 16 years working at Deloitte in Chicago. Deloitte provided many professional and personal development opportunities I am so grateful for, including working abroad in Hyderabad, India, and Geneva, Switzerland. Working abroad was a special experience for me where I learned so much about communicating and collaborating with others.

Currently, I am the president and co-founder of Go Green Glen Ellyn, a new community environmental group. I also serve on a number of volunteer boards, including Prairie Food Co-op, the Glen Ellyn Environmental Commission, the Glen Ellyn Park District Environmental Resident Advisory Board, and Friends of La Escuela Cooperativa (a non-profit, tuition-free preschool in Mexico). I am a member of the League of Women Voters and volunteer regularly with SCARCE and our elementary school. In my spare time, I love running outdoors and listening to music. I recently ran my first marathon and would be happy to share my playlist!

**You are involved in many things that highlight your passion for caring for our world. Please tell us about your progression into your roles at Go Green Glen Ellyn and Prairie Food Co-op.**

I've cared about the environment for as long as I can remember. I have memories of taking recyclables to the dump with my mom on family vacations and helping my college roommates save their bottles and cans for recycling. I spent a lot of time volunteering in the community throughout high school and college. But once I began a full-time job, and especially after I had kids, the time for giving back to my community seemed to evaporate. I left the corporate world in 2018 to be home to help my son with some therapy. While I loved the extra time with my kids, I missed being a part of a larger community outside my home.

About six months later, I joined a safer skincare products company that advocates for better health, protective laws at the federal and state level, and consumer education about ingredient safety. That was a moment when I realized advocacy didn't have to be this big heavy thing – it could be as simple as me telling a friend in Glen Ellyn about a sunscreen I love that is also safer for our oceans. While this opened my eyes to the simplicity of advocacy, I realized what a huge role education plays. I knew I wanted to share more information about the environment, but do it on a local level so people could put what they learned into action right at home. I was introduced to Beth Drucker, the founder of Go Green Wilmette, last year, who encouraged me to take a leap to start Go Green Glen Ellyn. Then this summer, I met Karin Daly, who shared my vision for a no-judgment, community environmental group. We spent time thinking about what we wanted Go Green Glen Ellyn to look like and sought advice from other community members before launching last fall.

In 2021, I joined the Board of Directors for Prairie Food Co-op (PFC). When the store opens, it will be the first community-owned grocery store in DuPage County. Supporting local businesses is great for our local economies as well as the environment since stuff will typically travel a shorter distance to your house. Prairie Food Co-op will provide a consistent marketplace for 300 local farmers and food producers. We plan to incorporate more sustainable aspects to our store compared to a conventional grocery store, such as more bulk items and increased recycling and composting.

**Tell us about Go Green Glen Ellyn and its goals. And how is it going so far?**

Go Green Glen Ellyn is a start-up community organization with a mission to make it easier for citizens and businesses in Glen Ellyn to be green(er).



We are part of the Go Green Illinois network, but Go Green Glen Ellyn is designed especially for our community. We want to be a “one-stop shop” for Glen Ellyn for green information, including answers to common questions, local events, volunteer opportunities, etc. We want to create a community of engaged individuals and organizations open to the full spectrum of “greenness.” I think if you are already an environmentalist, you know where to find this information and have a community. But most of us are not environmentalists, even though we might want to learn more about how to be greener. Go Green Glen Ellyn can be a catalyst to spark a green movement among GE residents and businesses alike.

We’ve grown quite a bit in the six months of our existence! We publish a weekly newsletter to a growing member base (sign up on our website). Last year we hosted nature walks, a forest clean-up and did a “Trees of Glen Ellyn” photo contest that was sponsored by the Glen Ellyn Chamber of Commerce. This year, we are partnering with the Glen Ellyn Park District on a Sports Swap for gently used sports equipment, as well as the Earth Day Restore event. We also began hosting community meet-ups to hear environmental questions and tips from local residents. This is a group designed to be hyper-local. We are just getting started and would love to have more hands on deck. The commitment could be an afternoon or a longer-term project. Reach out to us via email or at [gogreenglenellyn.org](http://gogreenglenellyn.org) to get involved or learn more!

**What is your favorite part of being so involved in our community?**

Connecting people and ideas has always been one of my favorite things. So the best part about being involved in the community is crossing paths with someone who’s working towards making Glen Ellyn a great place to live but doing it in their own way. I love showing up to a community event or Zoom call and realizing I have a mutual connection or interest with someone there and that we are working towards the same goals. It feels magical and serendipitous, which gives me the momentum to explore additional opportunities.

**How has being a mom influenced you and your decisions?**

Kids engage with nature in a completely different way than adults. My boys will complain until we leave the house, but once on a walk outside, they will fully immerse themselves by throwing rocks in lakes, climbing on logs, gathering sticks.



It has reminded me that within all of us is an innate and special connection to the natural world. Staring at a starry sky can create a sense of child-like awe in all of us. How many of us loved ice skating on Lake Ellyn this winter? Being a mom has made me grateful for our family memories in nature and motivates me to be a good steward of the outdoors for future generations.

**Who has been your greatest inspiration?**

It’s hard to pick one person! I’ve had so many conversations with people over the last several years about community involvement, from people who’ve been working on some of the same issues I have for as long as I’ve been alive to students who are my kids’ ages working to make a difference. The environmental community is so enthusiastic and welcoming, always willing to share information and work together to help one another. It’s refreshing after coming out of the corporate world.



**What do you want our moms to know about what they can be doing to make an impact on bettering our world?**

Caring for the environment (or any cause) can feel super overwhelming because there are so many competing interests. But first, you don’t have to have special knowledge or powers to make a difference. Rather than pursuing a more formal education in environmental studies, I decided I would access what was more freely available to me first and see what I could learn. And

there is plenty! I've read a lot of books, and thanks to COVID, there are also tons of free, virtual meetings and webinars you can attend. (We list a bunch of these in our weekly newsletters!) Second, if you want to make an impact, you don't have to do it alone! Get curious about what other people are doing in your community. I love learning what people are doing to better their own little corners of the world, and you will almost always find common ground. It's more fun to share successes and easier to troubleshoot challenges when you collaborate with others. That's exactly why we started Go Green Glen Ellyn – we know there are



a lot of people who want to do something to make an impact, but they might not want to do it alone or know where to start.

**How would following Go Green Glen Ellyn on social media help moms and local businesses? What can they learn?**



Following us on social media and especially signing up for our weekly e-newsletter will give you practical, everyday actions you can take to help the environment, as well as let you know about local environmental events. We are fortunate to have organizations in our area like the Glen Ellyn Park District, SCARCE, the Conservation Foundation, DuPage County Forest Preserves, and others, and we want to help amplify the great work these organizations are doing. We use a "Learn, Do, Participate" model when we share information. We try to share the why behind common environmental questions, then provide a tip and list activities happening in our area. These include outdoor clean-ups, nature walks, education sessions, family-friendly activities, and more.

**What is something important to you that you would like to share with our followers?**

One is a recycling tip. Don't put your recyclables in plastic bags! If they are bagged, they go straight to the landfill. Put your recyclable items loose in your bins. Second, all of us want to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and experience beautiful places with people we care about. Everyone can have an impact on our environment, and you can do it in your own way. I recommend starting with ONE change and making it something you care about. Talking to your family and friends about something you are doing that benefits both you and the planet – or asking a question if you want to try something – is a great place to start. Or, better still, email us at [gogreenglenellyn@gmail.com](mailto:gogreenglenellyn@gmail.com) so we can share it with our community!

Jacquelyn is one of the many moms in our community who is making a big impact on our community. I hope by reading this article, you and your family are inspired to live a greener or cleaner life. Each intentional choice we make helps our community. Whether it is getting involved in a garbage pickup along the Prairie Path or utilizing a green tip you learned by following Go Green Glen Ellyn, or even getting your kids involved in how your family can leave less of a footprint, each intentional action adds up to a better community for all. Thank you, Jacquelyn.

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