



center for  
**CHILDREN & YOUTH**  
JUSTICE | *Better systems. Better lives.®*

February 2009

## Better Systems. Better Lives. The CCYJ E-Newsletter



**Dear Friend,**

The Center for Children & Youth Justice celebrates its third birthday this month. In just three short years, we are already making an impact as we work to create better lives for children and youth involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems. We look forward to sharing our 2006-2008 progress report with you very soon. Until then, please enjoy this e-newsletter about our most recent programs, staff members, grants and activities.

Sincerely,  
Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.)  
Founding President/CEO

### 2nd annual fundraising breakfast set for Wednesday, May 13

#### **Norm Maleng Award will honor Perkins Coie**

This year's CCYJ breakfast is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, from 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. at the Washington Athletic Club. The highlight of the event will be the presentation of the 2nd annual Norm Maleng Advocate for Youth Award to law firm Perkins Coie, recognized for providing thousands of hours of pro bono legal service and volunteerism to nonprofit organizations serving at-risk children and youth.



Don't miss this opportunity to honor leaders in youth advocacy and to support the Center's work to improve our child welfare and juvenile justice systems. [Register](#) for the event today.

### CCYJ receives new grant from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

#### **Highly Vulnerable Youth: Promoting Positive Outcomes**

In 2006, a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation resulted in the Center's "Pathways to Success" report, which recommended 11 proven and promising programs aimed at preventing at-risk youth from entering the juvenile

justice system or producing better outcomes for youth already in the system. In December 2008, we received a second grant from the Foundation to enable us to evaluate the success of two of those programs - TeamChild and New Start Stay in School - in working with highly vulnerable youth facing cultural and language barriers.



Leading this effort will be one of our newest staff members, Gina Cumbo, who also is working on the Center's child welfare meta-analysis project. An attorney with experience in criminal law, disability law and working with children and youth, Gina joins CCYJ after serving as Assistant Regional Counsel for the Social Security Administration. She also worked as a staff attorney at the Snohomish County Public Defender Association. Gina earned her undergraduate degree from Fairhaven College of Western Washington University. She earned both her law and master of social work degrees at the University of Michigan.

"I feel privileged to be part of an organization committed to researched-based interventions. I believe that CCYJ's thoughtful, deliberate approach to advocacy will improve outcomes for all young people involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems."

## Working to address and prevent truancy

### Joint CCYJ-King County-State efforts target truant youth

Leila Curtis has joined our team as Truancy Project Coordinator. She is tasked with facilitating statewide truancy reform efforts and prevention/intervention strategies under the guidance of the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office and the Washington State Becca Task Force, chaired by Justice Bridge.

A licensed attorney and certificated teacher in Washington state, Leila is committed to helping kids recognize and access opportunities through education. She has served in various capacities in both law and education, namely as a law clerk to The Honorable Gerald L. Knight in Snohomish County Superior Court and as education director of the North Seattle Boys and Girls Club. Her experience also includes work in education and truancy for various public and private entities, including the Prosecuting Attorney's offices in King and Pierce counties, Seattle Public Schools, and Columbia Legal Services. Leila earned both her law and master in teaching degrees from the University of Washington.



"Truancy is usually a sign of a bigger problem. Often, our kids are faced with challenges in their schools, families or communities that affect their ability to go to school. It's important to address truancy through a holistic lens and provide ongoing support to our youth in their educational endeavors. I am honored and excited to support the efforts of the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office and Becca Task Force, which have been champions and innovators in finding ways to keep youth engaged in school and out of the criminal justice system."

## New project focuses on child welfare and domestic violence

### A coordinated, holistic response is the goal



When authorities respond to domestic violence situations, children in those violent households often are removed to foster care for their own protection. Yet these well-intentioned efforts can be more harmful than helpful by separating kids from the victimized parent, typically their mothers.

"The result is that women are sometimes afraid to call the police when they're suffering domestic violence because they're afraid their kids will be taken away," says third-year University of Washington Law School student Nicole Lindquist, who is spearheading a new Center project aimed at improving understanding, communication and coordination in these situations.

Nicole's efforts are a follow-through to the 2006 Domestic Violence-Child Maltreatment Protocol Project, which CCYJ Founding President and CEO Bobbe Bridge chaired. That project established statewide guidelines for protocols and coalitions among law enforcement, courts, Child Protective Services and social service organizations to coordinate responses to domestic violence incidents involving children.

Nicole is now tracking regional results of those efforts to identify and share successes while also determining roadblocks and how to overcome them. Eventually, the Center will bring together a think tank of local stakeholders who can work to move successful protocols forward statewide.

"It's a huge task to coordinate child welfare and domestic violence responses," says Nicole. "But it's a great step toward understanding that domestic violence pervades every aspect of a family's life and dealing with it from a holistic approach."

## Roundtable will explore challenges of military youth

### Project replicates national youth-at-risk discussions

The son of a Navy sailor who spent months at a time deployed on a submarine, Dustin Pearson knows first-hand the challenges of being a military kid. The Seattle University Law School graduate is now drawing upon his personal perspectives and legal expertise to help organize a roundtable discussion on the needs of at-risk military youth in Washington.

"Research shows that military youth have up to twice the rate of mental health issues than other youth. They move around a lot, change schools often, have absent parents, and experience the added stress today of having a parent at war," Dustin explains.

The new CCYJ project is modeled after similar efforts of the American Bar Association's Youth at Risk Commission, which brought attorneys together with policy makers, service providers, community groups and nonprofits in a series of discussion focusing on how to better collaborate,



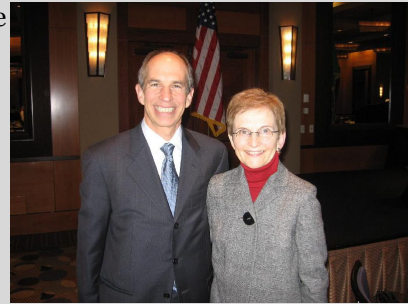
network and serve at-risk kids.

The roundtable Dustin is organizing would likely occur this summer and involve lawyers, counselors, military decision-makers and others in an informal brainstorming session to examine what's being done now and how all participants can help improve support services to military youth.

## 'Together, we can make that day come'

### Justice Bridge speaks to Seattle Downtown Rotary

CCYJ President and CEO Bobbe Bridge was the keynote speaker on Jan. 21 to the Seattle Rotary. Introduced by her husband, Rotarian Jon Bridge, she called upon the room full of business and community leaders to play active roles in bringing about systemic changes in foster care and juvenile justice. She concluded by offering these suggestions for getting involved:



**As an employer, take a chance on a youth with a troubled background and big dreams.** Guide them toward workforce training, encourage them to higher education, provide specific suggestions on sources for financial aid, teach them about budgeting and finances.

**Donate to or volunteer for a social service agency that helps children** who have been abused or neglected, in foster care, are runaways or homeless, or who have had trouble with the law. There are many excellent nonprofits like these across our state - Treehouse, YouthCare, Childhaven, the YWCA, Guardian Angels, Mockingbird Society and many, many more.

**Recognize that juvenile offender behavior is often the manifestation of more complex family issues** and that we cannot address one without the other. Be cautious about supporting measures which punish without addressing causes.

**Get involved yourself on a personal level with a child at risk or who has already offended or been in foster care.** Volunteer, mentor, tutor, act as a role model. You can make a difference, one child at a time.

**Use your moral, political and economic power.** Be willing to lead.

**Educate yourself and educate others** about the impact on our communities, our state and our future if we continue to fail system kids.

**Read your local newspapers** and encourage them to cover issues related to systems change. Write letters to the editor.

**Vote with our children's welfare in mind** - locally, statewide and nationally. Ask questions of candidates and hold them accountable for responses that deal directly and specifically with these issues.

**Contact your legislators** to encourage them to support specific proposals to improve our systems. They do pay attention to your emails and phone calls.

**Sign up for the CCYJ e-newsletter.** We'll keep you up to date on important activities and milestones.

## Former foster mom joins the CCYJ staff

### **Cynthia Hobbs, Executive Assistant and Operations Manager**

Cynthia joined CCYJ in January and assists Justice Bridge and oversees management of all office operations. She has more than 20 years experience as an administrative/executive assistant, including 15 years with the City of Seattle and five years with the Seattle School District, where she worked directly for the Superintendent.



Before coming to CCYJ in January 2009, she managed the day-to-day operations of The Legacy Foundation, benefiting the Greater Seattle Chapter of The Links, Inc., a women's community service and volunteer organization. Prior to that, she spent four years as the manager and chef for a fine dining restaurant.

"I was a foster parent 30 years ago, and I'm sure the needs of children are much greater today. To work with an organization that supports the needs of foster children is my way of giving back. President Barack Obama said we all need to help. How fortunate for me to work for an organization that makes a difference that can be seen in our foster system."

## Learn more about CCYJ

**The Center for Children & Youth Justice is shaping better lives for youth involved in Washington's foster care and juvenile justice systems. In partnership with parents, advocates and policymakers, the Center develops and advances innovative approaches to systemic changes that will support kids, stabilize families and strengthen communities.**

Visit our Web site at [www.ccyj.org](http://www.ccyj.org)  
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