



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

March 2011

Better Systems. Better Lives. The CCYJ E-Newsletter



Dear Friends,

What can make a room full of 400 people go totally silent for 20 minutes... and then explode into a prolonged standing ovation?

A courageous young woman who shares her story of overcoming a troubled past and then becomes a crusader for the rights of juvenile offenders to get the education and support they deserve.

What can prompt people to look beyond the label "teenage prostitute" to see the tragic exploitation of young girls... and then inspire them to do something about it?

The recipient of the Norm Maleng Advocate for Youth Award, who saw an opportunity to make a difference through systemic change and became a role model for us all.

And what can make the Center for Children & Youth Justice profoundly grateful for the confidence and support of our community?

A record turnout and fundraising total at our 4th annual Norm Maleng Advocate for Youth Award Breakfast on March 9.

For those who attended, thank you! For those who could not make it, read on for a glimpse of what made this a very, very special event.

Very truly yours,

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

CCYJ honors Jim Mallahan with Maleng Award

When Jim Mallahan learned about an innovative Seattle program to take victimized young girls off the streets and give them a new start on life, he was intrigued. When he learned that the program would shut down even before it got off the ground due to city budget cuts, he took action.

"This proposed program was the accumulation of a lot of hard work by a lot of smart and caring people who understood that children forced to sell their bodies were not criminals but victims," Jim recalled as he accepted this year's Norm Maleng Advocate for Youth Award. "Together, they had created policies and procedures that could direct these children, most of whom had exchanged an abusive home life for the abuse of the street, to an emergency shelter and then transitional housing and targeted social services tailored to their specific needs."



Jim quickly began rounding up support from elected officials, government agencies, friends and relatives who could all come together to commit the funding and the public will to save the [YouthCare Bridge Program](#).

His work paid off. Today, the program provides housing and comprehensive wraparound services for some 20 teens each year. It includes counseling for traumatic stress and trauma recovery, support groups, medical care, life skills, education support, job readiness training and more. The program has been hailed as a model for juvenile justice system reform.

"Having the opportunity to be involved in the founding of the Bridge Program for Prostituted Youth has been a gift of joy and hope," Jim concluded. "When I look at (the award) I will be reminded of multitude of people who have worked long and hard to make the Bridge Program a reality."



Left to right: Mark Maleng, Jim Mallahan, Bobbe J. Bridge, keynote speaker Starcia Ague and speaker José Gaitán.

'I won't ever stop fighting for them. I hope you won't either.'

Starcia Ague knows a few things about fighting. Growing up as the daughter of an addicted, neglectful mother and a drug-dealing father living in a meth house, she had to fight just to survive. And when she made a terrible mistake at the age of 15 and was sent to youth detention until her 21st birthday, she fought for the education she knew was her only chance to succeed.



At the Norm Maleng Advocate for Youth Award Breakfast, Starcia challenged guests to fight for kids like her.

"There must be reform so that juvenile mistakes won't have lifelong consequences for young people who have truly been rehabilitated like the system

intends and are committed to turning around their lives," emphasized the 23-year-old Olympia native, whose compelling story captivated guests.



"Both the foster care system and the juvenile justice system need to put kids first and to emphasize education more," she added. "When kids go into foster care, they shouldn't be split up or forgotten like me and my siblings were. And if youth do go into the juvenile justice system, they should not encounter constant roadblocks. They should get every possible chance to jump-start their college

education and be prepared for a lifetime of learning.

"But these things don't happen without reform, without organizations like CCYJ, or without caring people like all of you," Starcia concluded. "There are thousands of children in foster care waiting for stability, thousands of youth in the juvenile justice system waiting for support, thousands of success stories waiting to happen this very minute. I'm never going to stop fighting for them. I hope you won't ever stop either."

Read all of Starcia's [amazing story of success](#).

After five years, much more is yet to come for CCYJ

The first five years for the Center for Children & Youth Justice moved at a fast and furious pace, with reform efforts already paying dividends for kids in foster care and the juvenile justice system. And the future holds even more promise for real and lasting reform.

That was the message from CCYJ Founding President and CEO Bobbe J. Bridge, who lauded the Center's work to create "change that may start in one agency, one school or one county and then take hold statewide, even nationwide."

"Our next five years will find us addressing both ongoing and new opportunities to lead, collaborate and innovate as we see decision makers within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems becoming more and more willing to welcome the change that CCYJ promotes," she said.



"Policymakers want to do the right thing. They also want to do the cost-efficient thing. And it so often happens that reform -- while perhaps initially requiring new funding -- saves money in the long run. And it's through the collaborative work of CCYJ that we can bring people to the table to really examine how 'right' and 'efficient' can go hand in hand."

Read more in our [2010 Achievement Report](#).

THANK YOU to the sponsors of our 4th annual breakfast!

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*And, many thanks to our
breakfast emcee, Mimi Gan!*

For those who did not attend... good news!



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If you were unable to attend the Norm Maleng Advocate for Youth Award Breakfast, you can still support The Center for Children & Youth Justice's efforts to shape better lives for youth involved in Washington's foster care and juvenile justice systems. [Donate](#) securely online today!

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