

At the Child's Side

A Newsletter Published by Lawyers For Children, Inc.

Issue No. 10

"Unwavering advocacy for children
in foster care since 1984"

Executive Director's Message

New York City hosts one of the nation's largest populations of children in foster care. Unfortunately, for decades that fact has also meant that the five boroughs have stood out as a shameful national example of a child welfare system gone awry. However, at this moment child advocates are witnessing an historic change for children in foster care in our city. For the first time in at least twenty years, Lawyers For Children is able to report that New York City seems truly committed to child welfare reform through a collaborative dialogue on the most pressing needs of children in foster care.

LFC has always struck a delicate balance between being prepared to go to court to protect children in foster care, and working to achieve reform in ways that are less litigious and more collaborative. Now, LFC's expertise is being engaged as never before by John Mattingly, the City's current Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). The Commissioner has asked us to participate in the design and implementation of the many significant policy and practice reforms that have been initiated during the first nine months of Commissioner Mattingly's term.

For example, LFC's daily representation of thousands of children in foster care raised grave concerns for us about the inadequate services and punitive atmosphere at many group foster care facilities for adolescents in New York City. In response, LFC joined forces with Children's Rights, Inc. and the Juvenile Rights Division of the Legal Aid Society to conduct the first comprehensive, qualitative study of living conditions for teens in group continued pg 2.



Board of Directors

Chair

J. Shapiro, *Managing Director-Chieftain Capital Management*

Members

A. Abramson, *Esq., Abramson Brothers, Inc.*

K. Freedman, *Esq., Executive Director-Lawyers For Children*

S. Gelblum, *Esq., Partner-Loeb & Loeb, LLP*

Sr. M. P. Janchill, *Founder & Former Director-The Center For Family Life*

A. M. Klein, *Esq., Partner-Simpson Thacher & Bartlett*

A. Marks, *MD, Mount Sinai Medical Center, Adolescent Health*

M. Murray, *President-Whispering Pines, Inc.*

S. Nathan, *Esq.*

J. B. W. Stecher, *Esq.-Partner, Tannenbaum Helpem Syracuse & Hirschtritt, LLP*

D. Tanner, *Esq.-Managing Principal-Quadrangle Group, LLC*

V. Williams, *Esq., Partner-Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom*

Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.

LFC Receives National Recognition & Citywide Awards

Lawyers For Children has recently been honored as the recipient of several important awards and has been nationally recognized for our innovative programming. We are pleased to share these accolades with you, our supporters:

- The Association of the Bar of the City of New York awarded *The 2005 Kathryn A. McDonald Award for Excellence in Service to Family Court* to LFC's Executive Director, Karen J. Freedman, Esq., in recognition of the work of Lawyers For Children;
- The National Association of Family and Conciliation Courts has identified LFC as one of just ten children's programs across the nation to be included in their new publication, *"Exemplary Court Programs and Practices: Profiles of Innovative and Accountable Court-Connected Programs;"*
- LFC has been selected as a host site for the highly selective Equal Justice Works Fellowship. Beginning this fall, LFC will welcome EJW Fellow Myra Elgabry, whose project will address the specific needs of immigrant children in foster care in New York City;
- LFC has been selected as one of just three child advocacy organizations to be honored by the national law firm of Loeb & Loeb, at its recent gala *Spamalot* Benefit.



Lawyers For Children

110 Lafayette Street, 8th floor
New York, New York 10013
(212) 966-6420 Fax (212) 966-0531
www.lawyersforchildren.org



Executive Director's Message Continued:

settings in New York City foster care. Our work culminated in the publication of a groundbreaking study, *Time Running Out: Teens in Foster Care*. The Commissioner's response to the study has included agency closings, program re-organizations and collaborative planning with LFC. ACS is finally beginning to move away from a punitive, control-

based model of foster care for adolescents, towards a youth oriented, service-rich, family-centered model. In addition to attracting the attention of NYC's Commissioner, LFC's unique approach to using direct client representation to inform our positions on policy reform has been commended by the prestigious National Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The Association has identified LFC as one of only ten children's programs in the nation to be included in their new publication, *Exemplary Court Programs and Practices: Profiles of Innovative and Accountable Court Connected Programs*.

Positive change is definitely in the air, and we thank all of our supporters for making it possible for LFC to continue to be a leader in the fight to defend every child's right to grow up feeling safe, loved and secure. As we move forward, our achievements continue to inspire our efforts to improve the lives of the children who count on us to speak up for them and protect their rights.

Karen J. Freedman,
Executive Director

Long-Sought Legislative Reform Appears Imminent!

As this newsletter goes to press, Lawyers For Children has learned that critical new child permanency legislation has been passed by both houses in Albany. Over the past two years, LFC has educated legislators about the needs of children in foster care and explained how this particular Child Permanency bill would impact these vulnerable young people. Governor Pataki has indicated that he will sign the Bill, which should then go into effect early this fall.

One of the provisions of the new law that is of greatest importance to LFC's clients grants the Family Court continuing jurisdiction over all children in foster care between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. Previously, the Family Court was unable to address the needs of young people voluntarily placed in foster care at the moment when they were most in need of help—as they made the transition from foster care to adult independence. Unlike young adults who entered foster care on abuse or neglect petitions, voluntarily placed foster children had no access to the family court after their eighteenth birthdays, even if they found themselves being discharged from foster care to the streets.

In a cruel example of how the law operated before this new bill, we recently discovered the plight of Jason, one of our clients who suffers from severe developmental delays. Jason was asked by his foster care agency to sign himself out of foster care on his eighteenth birthday. Jason had been in foster care for eleven years and has never lived without extensive supportive services. The plan was for the agency to put Jason on a bus and send him to Philadelphia to live with his mother. Unfortunately, Jason's mother has never cared for him, has refused to allow him to visit, and was not willing to accept Jason into her home. When LFC discovered what was to take place, we immediately met with Jason and found that he had absolutely no understanding of what was about to take place. As far as he knew, his mother was finally going to care for him. Because we received this information just days before Jason's eighteenth birthday, we were able to go to family court and obtain an order requiring the agency to plan with Jason for the supportive transition to an adult residence that he wanted and deserved. Under the new statute, even after the hundreds of other foster children like Jason have passed their eighteenth birthdays, LFC will be able to use the Family Court to insure that they are never discharged to a lonely life on the streets of an unknown city.

WISH LIST

At LFC, we try to use all of our resources to maximize the quality of the advocacy and services that we provide to our young clients. Often, donated goods or services can help us provide much-needed assistance to our clients in times of crisis and special need. Items on our current "wish list" include:

- MetroCards of all amounts for client emergencies
- Retail gift cards (for drug stores, book stores, department stores, clothing and baby supply stores, etc.) for client emergencies
- Mac-compatible laptop or notebook computers
- Mac-compatible color printers
- Cellular phones
- Cellular phone service

If you are interested in contributing any of the items on our wish list, or if you would like to make a financial contribution, please feel free to call our toll-free phone number (800) 244-2540, visit our web site www.lawyersforchildren.org, or contact us by mail at 110 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10013. All contributions to Lawyers For Children, Inc. are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

LFC Welcomes an Extraordinary Group of 2005 Summer Law and Social Work Interns

Each year, LFC is fortunate to select our summer legal and social work interns from among hundreds of stellar applicants from all over the country. This year, we have a truly exceptional group of law and social work students to work directly with our staff attorneys and social workers. On behalf of our clients, Board and staff, we would like to express our gratitude to all of our interns for assisting us in creating positive change in the lives of children.

2005 Legal Interns

Sharon Balmer,
Fordham University School of Law
Rebecca Baneman,
University of Pennsylvania Law School
Kafui Bediako,
New York University School of Law
Kelly Brown,
Harvard Law School
Nikisha Ferguson,
City University of New York Law School
Rebekah Fletcher,
City University of New York Law School
Nadine Gartner,
University of Michigan Law School
Erica Nelson,
Rutgers University School of Law
Soledad Romero,
Fordham University School of Law
Tracy Schloss,
University of Michigan Law School
Tami Suh,
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

2005 Social Work Interns

Sarah Douglas,
Clark University
Laura Fuhrman,
Cornell University
Lydia Hwang,
Duke University
Sami Ingram,
Washington University

Elise Kessler,
New York University
Jennifer Levine,
University of Michigan
Alexandra Reeve
Yale University
Samantha Rivera,
Middlebury College
Allie Roth,
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Sandy Zaeh,
Princeton University
Jessica Zweifach,
Cornell University
Ami Zweig,
Duke University

Holiday Thrills for LFC Clients from Bloomberg, Inc.

For the past three years, Bloomberg, Inc. has included Lawyers For Children in its extremely generous employee-sponsored philanthropy program, Best of Bloomberg ("BOB"). As part of the BOB holiday program, LFC clients have been invited to tour Bloomberg Inc.'s high-tech New York headquarters and to attend

parties held especially for them at celebrated locations around the city, including Splashlight Studios and the Big Apple Circus tent at Lincoln Center. During this year's holiday season, Bloomberg employees, in partnership with Toys "R" Us, bought, wrapped and delivered holiday gifts for more than 75 of our youngest clients. Children received new, brightly-wrapped presents including board games, musical instruments, stuffed animals, art supplies, puzzles, and much more. For many of our clients, these were the only holiday gifts that they received.

It has been an honor to be among the worthy organizations that Bloomberg, Inc. employees have chosen to share their good fortune with year after year, and a joy to share that good fortune with the young people we are privileged to represent. We would like to extend our thanks to Crystal Easton and the rest of the Bloomberg staff who have dedicated their time and energy to making the holiday season brighter for our clients and for the hundreds of other young people in foster care whom they honor each year.

Longing For a Grandmother's Love

When five- and seven-year-old Angie and Christina first met their LFC attorney and social worker, they drew pictures of themselves playing on the beach with their grandmother in California. Several years ago, when their mother died, the girls left California and moved to New York with their father. Soon after arriving in New York, their father left them with an aunt, while he served a lengthy prison sentence for selling stolen cars. Shortly after moving in with their aunt the girls were sexually abused by male adults living in their aunt's home. Their aunt refused to acknowledge that the abuse had taken place, and the girls were placed into foster care. Their LFC social worker, child sexual abuse specialist Lisa Lubell, immediately ensured that the girls were referred to a therapist specializing in sexual abuse. Angie and Christina continued to speak fondly of their grandmother and told Lisa that they longed to be reunited with her on the West Coast. The girls' foster care agency had repeatedly failed to locate or investigate the grandmother as a resource. However, using information obtained from our clients and their father, Ms. Lubell was able to contact their grandmother.

Within a month of learning that the girls were in foster care, their grandmother moved into a more spacious apartment and furnished two bedrooms for the girls. Ms. Lubell traveled across the country to evaluate the home and the school that the girls would attend, and put their grandmother in touch with a child guidance program for older adults taking care of young family members. At the next court date, the judge granted the LFC attorney's application to reunite Angie and Christina with their grandmother. Angie and Christina have now returned to their grandmother's loving home, to heal from their trauma, and reclaim their childhood.



Relationships and Support



Corporate and Foundation Support over \$1,000

James S. Adams Foundation
Fanny and Lasor Agoos Charity Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Appleman Foundation
Atlantis Research Foundation
Lily Auchincloss Foundation
Ayco Charitable Foundation
Barth Foundation
Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
The Berman Foundation
Edith C. Blum Foundation
Booth Ferris Foundation
Martha and Regina Brand Foundation
Shirley C. Burden Charitable Lead Trust
Calico Corners
Chanin Family Foundation
Charina Foundation
The Chase Manhattan Bank
Chemical Bank
CHH Realty
The Child Welfare Fund
CIBC World Markets Corporation Miracle Day
Citicorp Foundation-Match
Liz Claiborne Foundation-Match
The Robert Sterling Clark Foundation
Cleary Gotlieb Steen & Hamilton
Combined Jewish Philanthropies
Debevoise & Plimpton
Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky, LLP
Dreitzer Foundation
Equal Justice Works
Family Publishing Group, Inc
FJC, A Community Foundation of Donor
Advised Funds
Susan K. Freedman and Rabbi Richard
Jacobs Family Fund

Fidelity Charitable Foundation
Beatrice S. and Lloyd Frank Philanthropic
Fund
Freddie Mac Corporation
Fulbright & Jaworski
Richard S. Fuld, Jr. Foundation, Inc
Fund for the City of New York
Furth Family Foundation
The Bernard and Gimbel Foundation
Leslie Gimbel Fund
The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
Golenblock & Barell
The Glickenhau Foundation
Robert and Trudy Gottesman Philanthropic
Fund
Lee Gottlieb Fund
Greenberg Foundation
David J. Green Foundation
Glenn H. Greenberg and Linda Vester
Foundation
Efraim Grinberg Family Foundation
Grosberg Fund
Steven B. and Elizabeth S. Gruber
Philanthropic Fund
Hasbro Foundation
Hongkong/HSBC Bank
Hunt Alternatives Fund
Interest On Lawyer Account Fund
Howard and Samita Jacobs Foundation
Jenjo Foundation
Jewish Communal Fund
Joelson Foundation
The Jordan Company
Kasdan Family Foundation
Kaye, Scholer, Fierman, Hays & Handler
Ketcham & McDougal Fund
Lavanburg-Corner House
Leibowitz & Greenway Charitable Foundation

Lewis Family Charitable Fund
Lipshutz/Silverman Family Fund
The Joe & Emily Lowe Foundation
The Martin R. Lewis Charitable Foundation
Loeb & Loeb, LLP
Lowenstein Foundation
Marks Family Foundation
Merlin Foundation
Millbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, LLP
The Mitzvah Foundation
Monterey Fund
JP Morgan Charitable Trust
The MONY Financial Services Foundation
Morrison & Foerster Foundation
Hilda Mullen Foundation
Alvin & Louise Myerberg Family Foundation
Ruth G. and Edgar J. Nathan, 3rd
Philanthropic Fund
NAPIL /Open Society Institute
The New York Community Trust
New York Mercantile Exchange
The New York Times Company Foundation
David P. Nolan Foundation
Normandie Foundation
Shirley Olividati Trust
PKL Foundation
Parker, Chapin, Flattau & Kimpl
The Parker Foundation
Phillipson Family Foundation
The Ponagansett Foundation
Pfizer, Inc.
Prestige Planning Corporation
Prudential Foundation-Match
Pumpkin Trust
Queen's Gate Foundation
Rabinowitz Charitable Foundation
The Rockefeller Foundation-Match
Arthur Ross Foundation

SG&G Foundation
Schafer Family Foundation
Solomon Schechter School-Keren Ami Fund
Scherman Foundation, Inc.
Scheuer Associates Foundation
Schulman, Weingarten & Co. LLP
Charles & Mildred Schnurmacher Foundation
Robert and Barbara Schwartz Philanthropic
Fund
Segal Corp.
Shapiro-Silverberg Foundation
Selma & Alvin Silverman Foundation
Silverweed Foundation
Skadden Fellowship Foundation
Stecher Family Foundation
Thomas D. and Denise R. Stern Family
Foundation
Studio One
The Studio in a School Association
Sudler Foundation
Sussman Family Foundation
Thelen Reid & Preist
James and Merry! Tisch Philanthropic Fund
The Laurie Tisch Sussman Foundation
United Jewish Foundation
United Way-Match
Wahrshager Foundation
Sandra and George Weiksner Foundation
Weil Gotshal & Manges
Weithorn and Ehrmann Families Fund
Lawrence and Idell Weisberg Foundation
Yahoo! Employee Fund

Government Support

State of New York, Unified Court System

The names and photographs appearing in this newsletter are fictional representations.

Lawyers For Children

110 Lafayette Street, 8th Floor, New York, New York 10013