Executive Director’s Message

Imagine being a young person, alone and without family, trying to navigate the complexities of New York’s courts and foster care system. Imagine having no family to turn to when you are afraid, are failing in school, are being hurt or are living on the streets. At best, it would be overwhelming; at worst, terrifying and debilitating.

Lawyers For Children is now marking 30 years of transforming this scenario for individual clients while improving the entire foster care environment. We have challenged the system, set legal precedents and lead the way on education, housing, LGBTQ and other vital issues.

When I created Lawyers For Children in 1984, it was in response to what I saw as a desperate need for all children in foster care to receive both legal and social work advocacy and support—no matter how they entered the foster care system. Over the past three decades, LFC has changed the lives of over 30,000 children, while evolving and innovating to both meet the needs of our individual clients and achieve comprehensive reforms of the foster care system.

We have safely and successfully reunited children with parents, siblings, and supportive

LFC Launches Youth Ambassador Program

We are thrilled to announce that this year, we have invited five of our young adult clients to become LFC’s first Youth Ambassadors. The Youth Ambassador program was designed to acknowledge the hard work of some of our outstanding young adult clients in school, at work, and in their personal lives, and to more deeply engage them with Lawyers For Children and the community.

The Youth Ambassadors recently received communication skills training provided by Kekst & Company Senior Vice President Jeremy Fielding (LFC Board member) and Kekst Associate Stefanie Goodsell (LFC Leadership Council member). In addition, they participated in the creation of our “You Are Not Alone” series of videos and attended several meetings in which they shared their experiences in foster care with foundations, board members and community advocates. The Youth Ambassadors have told us that they love having the opportunity to give back to Lawyers For Children, and, in turn, we are grateful to have the opportunity to learn from their experiences, their courage, and their determination to succeed.
family members; we have found loving and welcoming homes for children who cannot return to their parents; we have provided for the emergency needs of our most vulnerable clients when their foster care agencies have failed them; we have brought class action lawsuits on behalf of all children in foster care; and most importantly, we have remained a constant presence at the side of all of our clients.

Most recently, one of our older clients put it this way, “I feel like part of a family when I come to LFC—that’s because ‘my LFC’ is what my family can’t be—a safe place to turn whenever I am scared or need help.”

I am so proud of the compassion, energy and positive results that our incomparable staff offer to children every day, and I look forward to another thirty years of Lawyers For Children serving New York City’s children with this same outstanding skill and dedication.

—Karen J. Freedman, Esq.

New Media Projects Improve Awareness

Thanks to the generosity of LFC board members Heidi Rieger, Trish O’Donald, David Tanner, and Jamie Stecher, LFC was able to undertake several new projects over the past year to help us increase awareness about our work.

Our new four-minute video (available at www.lawyersforchildren.org) describes our unique interdisciplinary approach and tells the powerful stories of two of our young clients.

In addition, we created a set of one-minute videos to answer the most common questions our clients ask, such as “What if I don’t feel safe in my home?” “What if I become homeless after I leave foster care?” and “What if I’m not getting the help I need at school?”

In addition to these improvements, LFC has also established a presence on Twitter over the last few months. Twitter has allowed us to engage in dialogue with peer organizations and state legislators and to educate the general public about foster care and current events in the child welfare community.

Finally, LFC will be unveiling a new website, with our updated logo, a new design and richer content, later this summer.
LFC Team Responds in a Crisis

After Ian’s teacher discovered that he was being abused by his mother, he was placed into foster care. He was just 15 years old and severely traumatized. Ian was struggling to adjust to life in foster care, and he was placed in a residential treatment facility, where he was to receive specialized therapeutic services. Instead of the supportive environment Ian needed, he was threatened and intimidated by a staff member at the facility.

He called his LFC attorney, who immediately found a safe emergency placement where he could stay until a home could be found. However, when Ian arrived at the temporary placement, he was told that he did not have permission to leave the residential treatment facility and needed to return at once. He called his LFC social worker, desperate for help.

Within an hour, Ian’s LFC attorney appeared in court and secured an emergency order requiring the city to find him a safe, supportive and appropriate placement. By that night, Ian was sleeping in his new therapeutic foster home, where he has been receiving services and support for the past three months. His LFC social worker reports that he is feeling better every day, is on track at school and is developing the strong bonds with his foster parents that promise a successful future.

Attorney Runs Triathlon for LFC

Education Advocacy Project Director Laura Daly Zaragoza recently raised over $1,200 for Lawyers For Children when she and her husband completed a triathlon and asked their friends and family to support their cause. We are thrilled for Laura for her amazing achievement, and grateful to her for using this opportunity to support LFC!

LFC Welcomes EJW Fellow Marisa Gold

This year, the Lawyers For Children team welcomed Marisa Gold, a Morrison & Foerster Equal Justice Works Fellow, as the new attorney on our Child Sexual Abuse Evaluation and Education Project. This project was created in 1994, and has been spearheaded by social worker Lisa Lubell for the past fourteen years. The project works with some of the most vulnerable children in foster care, those who have faced sexual trauma.

Marisa has a long-standing interest in issues surrounding child welfare, and in sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and sex trafficking cases in particular. She attended law school at the University of Pennsylvania, where she completed extensive clinical work on several cases involving sexual exploitation. During her time at LFC, she has been developing the specialized legal component of the project by engaging in extensive training in and outside of New York City, consulting on cases, taking new referrals, strengthening connections with partner organizations, and gathering and developing resources for our clients and our staff.

LFC’s staff and clients are so fortunate to benefit from Marisa’s ever-expanding legal expertise in this critical area of our practice.
Each summer, LFC offers an intensive internship opportunity to highly qualified law and college students. These students develop an understanding of the child welfare system in New York City and the vital role that our interdisciplinary teams play in effectively advocating for children in foster care. We are proud of the broad range of experiences that our extraordinary interns bring to their work at LFC, and we thank them for sharing their many talents with us and with the children we represent.

LFC Welcomes
2014 Summer Interns

Legal Interns
Patrick Chilelli
NYU School of Law
Mary DiPastina
Rutgers School of Law
Lindsay Egan
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law
Maria Paz Zarzar Encina
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law
Kaydene Grinnell
NYU School of Law
Morgan Guinnip
Brooklyn Law School
Iris Hsiao
NYU School of Law
Sara Isaacson
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law
Tesse Juste
Fordham Law School
Mia Luna
New York Law School
Caroline Turner
Columbia Law School

Social Work Interns
Jill Chatzinoff
Duke University
Jessica Katzen
Wesleyan University
Sarah Revesz
Swarthmore College
Alana Becker
Cornell University
Elliot Rosenbaum
Union College
Carly Rabner
Princeton University
Lily Cron
Lehigh University
Samantha Malis
Brandeis University
Meredith McPhail
The University of Southern Mississippi
Lily Lesser
Princeton University
Batsheva Greenwood
Grinnell College
Callie Silver
Cornell University, College of Human Ecology

www.lawyersforchildren.org

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