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Justice for Youth Campaign Legacy Grows

Bench, Bar and service agencies are stealthily continuing joint efforts to transform the permanency planning process for troubled families who come to Juvenile Court. Children in abuse, neglect or dependency proceedings deserve a permanent stable home as soon as possible. Several new options for speeding resolution of such cases have recently been implemented.

Judge Nancy Sidote Salyers, Presiding Judge of the Child Protection Division, approached the Chicago Bar Association and the Chicago Bar Foundation last spring about creating an Assistance Desk in the Daley Center to help people seeking to become guardians of minors. The award winning result is profiled in this issue of the *CBA News*.

Another group whose cases used to languish are wards of D.C.F.S. who could be adopted by private parties. Most of these children become legal "orphans" because of the death or disappearance of parents or because findings of severe abuse and neglect lead to termination of parental rights. Peggy Slater, long time C.B.A. Juvenile Law Committee member and current Chair, championed efforts to identify subgroups of children within this growing population whose cases could be resolved with *pro bono* assistance. D.C.F.S. General Counsel Cheryl Cesario, asked the CBA/CBF and the Northwestern Legal Clinic's Children & Family Justice Center for assistance in completing the legal work on such adoptions. CBF agreed to manage the program if the Center would provide technical assistance and if we could recruit a team of volunteer attorneys to handle the cases. The firm of Vedder Price Kaufman and Kammholz agreed to anchor the project and over a dozen of their attorneys, plus four other attor-

neys signed up to take cases. Voila! — the Adoption Assistance Project began operations in November.

The Campaign also highlighted the need for more user-friendly court facilities. Thanks to Illinois Action for Children and the Citizens Committee for the Juvenile Court, many of the waiting rooms outside courtrooms now have play areas. Moreover, the Young Lawyers Section of the CBA has produced a video, "What's it All About? Understanding the Neglect & Abuse Process". The video explains to children and their caregivers the court procedures and what to expect from Court officials. When fundraising is completed for purchase and installation of monitors, it will be shown in all waiting rooms as well.

Another element of the Campaign emphasized the need for expanding volunteer involvement with youth at risk. The Bar Foundation's Lend A Hand program, a direct outgrowth of that recommendation, has now helped to recruit hundreds of volunteers for placement in inner city tutor/mentor programs. Its efforts are being complimented by Judge Sophia Hall, Presiding Administrative Judge for Community Resources, who has made linkages with such programs a focus of the juvenile court's community outreach activities. Both the Foundation and the Court also have benefited from a strong relationship with the Tutor/Mentor Connection program which provides networking and support services to over 200 programs in Chicago.

Lawyers Lending a Hand

The Chicago Bar Foundation Lend A Hand Programs provide needed resources to mentor and tutor programs throughout Chicago. One on one contact between adults and at-risk youth is essential to provide these youth opportunities and skills to succeed under difficult circumstances. We have many ways that you can lend your hand, your heart, your time, or your money to these children. Please join the hundreds of other lawyers already lending a hand through our programs.



☐ I would like more information on volunteering as a tutor at the Juvenile Court Detention Center.

☐ I would like more information on other tutor/mentor opportunities in Chicago.

☐ Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution to the Lend A Hand Fund, helping to support tutor/mentor efforts in Chicago.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Detach and mail this coupon to:
The Chicago Bar Foundation
321 S. Plymouth Court
Chicago, IL 60604