

JUVENILE COURT PROJECT



PARENT ADVOCATES



The JCP's Birthparent Mentoring Initiative commenced with a fund-raising breakfast in May. Pictured from left are program coordinator Cynthia Hornsby, Judge Cheryl Allen and program supervisor DeLisa Coleman.

Mentoring Initiative Begins

Proclaiming that "the government can give you money but it can't give you a hug," Lisa Thorpe-Vaughn asked guests at the May 13 fund-raising breakfast for the Juvenile Court Project's Birthparent Mentoring Initiative to commit their time, talent and resources on behalf of Allegheny County mothers in need of positive role models.

Thorpe-Vaughn of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation was a guest speaker at the event, which served to introduce the Birthparent Mentoring Initiative to the community. She spoke about the benefits of mentoring and has been an important advisor to the JCP during its development of the program.

According to program supervisor DeLisa Coleman and program coordinator Cynthia Hornsby, the initiative

seeks to match young mothers who are at risk of entering the juvenile court dependency system with mentors to assist them in learning life skills and obtaining necessary support services. It is the brainchild of Judge Cheryl Allen and Pastor Connie Brooks of the Gilead Center.

"To be a positive role model for their children, these women need a positive role model for themselves," Judge Allen told the gathering. "Prayerfully, this will not be just another program; programs don't change people, relationships change people."

Volunteer mentors were trained in June and the first mentor-mentee orientation took place in July. For additional information about the program, contact DeLisa Coleman at 391-4467 ext. 219.

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JCP 2nd annual
Public Policy Forum
featuring

Linda Mills
New York University
Professor of Social Work and Law
author of
"Insult to Injury: Rethinking
Our Responses to Intimate Abuse"

October 26-2 p.m.
See story on page 2.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Juvenile Court Project is a legal assistance program of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation. Our mission is to advocate for the interests and protect the legal rights of indigent parents whose children are the subjects of Juvenile Court dependency and termination of parental rights proceedings.

JUVENILE COURT PROJECT

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Director's Letter

By Mark D. Edwards

The Allegheny County Bar Foundation Juvenile Court Project has been zealously representing parents in Juvenile Court for twenty years. Although many organizations and "players" in the system are familiar with the critical role a Parent Advocate plays, many are unaware that the Juvenile Court Project is a key program of a broader organization that benefits low income residents of Allegheny County.

As the philanthropic arm of the Allegheny County Bar Association, the Allegheny County Bar Foundation operates a variety of charitable, educational, pro bono and public service activities in Allegheny County.

On Wednesday October 13, 2004 Morris Dees will be the featured speaker at the Bar Foundation Fellows Program. Dees is the founder and chief trial counsel of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Center, established in 1971 has been engaged in numerous key civil

rights cases on behalf of indigent clients.

Established in 1996 by the Bar Foundation, the Fellows Program recognizes and honors attorneys who have shown a commitment to excellence in community and public service activities. Proceeds from the Fellows Program fund two critical initiatives: 1) assist with the establishment of an endowment to exceed one million dollars, the interest income of which will be used to fund a pro bono coordinator who will help enhance the delivery of pro bono legal services to low income clients in Allegheny County 2) provide grants to community programs that directly provide pro bono legal services to low income clients.

The Attorneys Against Hunger campaign raises funds to support area hunger service agencies. Since 1993, Attorneys Against Hunger has raised over \$347,000 to help families in need in Allegheny County. The Divorce Law Project, now located in the same location as the Juvenile Court Project, handles no fault cases on behalf of indigent clients.

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Forum to Challenge Abuse Beliefs

According to Linda Mills, professor of social work and law at New York University, there is no such thing as an absolute victim when it comes to domestic violence. Mills will discuss her provocative theory at the Juvenile Court Project's 2nd annual Public Policy Forum on October 26.

Mills new book *Insult to Injury: Rethinking Our Responses to Intimate Abuse* (Princeton University Press) has generated an intense debate among those currently engaged in the battle against domestic violence. In it she proposes a ground-breaking model for intervention in domestic violence cases, one that lets families stay together and heal if that is their wish.

"As we have seen, intimate abuse is a deeply personal issue that calls for the people involved to make choices about how they want to address it—punishment or healing," Mills writes in her book. "Without understanding that we need responses

that account for both options, we will continue to impose our own judgments about how violence should be addressed and never truly engage the people who need our insight and understanding."

Mills advocates for the use of an "Intimate Abuse Circle" process designed to facilitate a dialogue between the parties, which includes the couple's friends, family and children in the healing process.

"Intimate Abuse Circles provide a distinct alternative to the adversity and shame associated with the criminal justice system and should be viewed as a way of counteracting the current system's limitations," states Mills.

The Public Policy Forum will take place at the ACBA Conference Center on the 9th floor of the City-County Building in downtown Pittsburgh beginning at 2 p.m. There is no assessment but seating is limited. For a reservation call Sharon Biasca at 391-4467 ext. 216.

Former Director Ehrenreich Retires From JCP Service

After 20 years of distinguished service to the Juvenile Court Project, former director Linda Ehrenreich has retired from her assiduous work representing indigent parents in juvenile court abuse and neglect cases.

In celebration of Ehrenreich's exceptional career, the Allegheny County Bar Association hosted a May 26 reception at the Rivers Club attended by her family, friends and colleagues.

Guests included Supreme Court Justice Max Baer, Judge Kathleen Mulligan, Judge Kim Clark and Judge Cheryl Allen. ACBA Executive Director David Blaner presented Ehrenreich with a pearl necklace as a token of appreciation and JCP Director Mark Edwards gave her a crystal scale of justice on behalf of the JCP staff.

Other special guests were Washington County Judge Kathy Emery who was one of the first parent advocate attorneys in Allegheny County, and Ehrenreich's husband Irwin with children Hope and Jeffrey.

Ehrenreich began her career as a parent advocate in 1984 and was subsequently promoted to JCP project coordinator and director. In June of 2002 she left the director's position but continued to serve as executive counsel.

Under Ehrenreich's leadership, the JCP grew from two part-time attorneys to 16 full-time attorneys and six contract attorneys representing 2,500 clients annually.

A member and former chairman of the ACBA Juvenile Law Committee, Ehrenreich attended Vassar College before earning her bachelor's degree in education from the University of Pittsburgh, where she graduated magna cum laude. She taught high school English for four years in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and went on to earn a juris doctorate at the Duquesne University School of Law.

"Linda really was the heart and soul of this place," noted one JCP staff attorney. "She gave many of us our first job and went on to serve as our most important mentor. Her grace and wisdom will be sorely missed."



Washington County Judge Kathy Emery (right) and Lori Brenner (left) congratulate Linda Ehrenreich on her retirement after twenty years of service to the JCP. Judge Emery was one of the first parent advocate attorneys in Allegheny County and Brenner began her legal career as a JCP intern.



Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer was one of the many well-wishers at the May retirement party for former JCP director Linda Ehrenreich.



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BRIEFS...

NEW ATTORNEYS—Two new attorneys have joined the JCP. Jeffrey Eisenberg has practiced law for 12 years, most recently as a sole practitioner in Cambria County. He holds a law degree from Duquesne University. Benjamin Zuckerman graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 2001 and was formerly employed by Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Services in Uniontown.

OUTREACH—The JCP's Ray Sanchas, John Hayes and Linda Cuttler recently participated in valuable community forums. Sanchas presented a workshop at the Northeast Family Preservation Association conference, which outlined strategies for parents in the Juvenile Court dependency system. Hayes addressed how parents can effectively partner with caseworkers at a Touching Families program in McKeesport co-sponsored by the JCP and Parents Anonymous. Cuttler spoke about the JCP to attendees at a symposium sponsored by the Center for Victims of Violence and Crime at Chatham College, which served to break the silence about violence in the lives of black women.

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A full time attorney fielded over 1,200 inquiries in 2003–2004. Nine named funds provide scholarship opportunities to students as well as continuing legal education programs and financial assistance to attorneys in need.

The Center for Volunteer Legal Resources works directly with fourteen community organizations which screen and place eligible clients with volunteer attorneys. In conjunction with Alcoa, H.J. Heinz, PPG Industries, and U.S. Steel Corporation, the Allegheny County Bar Foundation has partnered with Pittsburgh area law firms and legal departments to significantly increase pro bono legal assistance by attorneys and legal assistants. This has resulted in the creation of the Pittsburgh Pro Bono Partnership. As part of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation, the Juvenile Court Project is able to work closely with these various programs which can benefit the clients we represent. For more information about the Allegheny County Bar Foundation please visit www.acbf.org.

JCP MAKES ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Mark D. Edwards has been promoted to Director of Administration and Development of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation. In that capacity he will continue to direct the Juvenile Court Project. Eleanor Grainy has been promoted to Senior Managing Attorney and will be responsible for day to day legal operations of the JCP. Edwards can be reached at 412-402-6640 or at medwards@acba.org