

Children's Champion Newsletter

SAVE THE DATE!
September 21, 2010

10th Annual *Helping Children Soar* Benefit
Kennedy Center Roof Terrace Restaurant
Chaired by CLC Board Treasurer May Liang
and CLC Champion Diana Goldberg
Stay tuned to our website for updated information



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Take Two Lawyers and Call Me in the Morning



Asthma, which affects 12 percent of the District's children, ranges from a mild nuisance to a dangerous disease. For low-income children living in apartments infested with mice, rats or roaches, it is life-threatening. A prescription for medication isn't enough to prevent asthma attacks triggered by the dander and feces left by these unwanted intruders.

Luckily, pediatricians at Children's National Medical Center's community health clinics can write a different kind of prescription - a referral to a lawyer - that sends parents across the hall to meet with a Children's Law Center attorney. The lawyer can file a lawsuit or simply convince a landlord that fixing the problem is legally required. In addition to handling hazardous housing matters, CLC attorneys help children who are not getting a proper education because of a health condition or children who are not getting the specialized physical or mental health services they need.

Housed in four community health centers around the District, CLC attorneys are part of the team available to pediatricians to solve their patients' health problems. When it was launched in 2002, the medical-legal partnership between Children's Law Center and Children's National Medical Center was the third in the country. There are now 180 partnerships nationwide.

This close partnership with CNMC has also led to systemic reform. CLC's executive director and the Medical Director of CNMC's Children's Health Centers of Southeast DC recently testified at a DC Council hearing in support of legislation that would give tenants faster resolution to housing conditions cases - and give children a healthier start. [Learn more about our work.](#)

News from Judith



The nation's capital has always been a tale of two cities - affluent Washington, DC on the front page of the paper and the persistent poverty of the District of Columbia hidden in the Metro section. Nothing illustrates this divide more starkly than DC

being ranked by Portfolio.com as the second best city in the country for young people aged 18-34. Among the factors Portfolio.com cited were the high percentage of young people with bachelor's degrees, high average per capita income and the low regional unemployment rate.

Residents of the city's poorest neighborhoods, Wards 5, 7 and 8, might be excused for being incredulous. For them, the unemployment rate far exceeds the national average and the poverty rate is as high as 36 percent. For the one in three children who are growing up poor in the District, the opportunity to graduate from college and earn a decent wage is very far away.

Consider this reality:

- 57 percent of 9th graders will not graduate from high school and only 9 percent will graduate from college;

- The 27% unemployment rate in Ward 8 far outpaces the citywide rate of 12 percent;

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Take Two Lawyers and Call Me in the Morning (Continued)

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Client Success Story: Baby Monica

Children's Law Center attorney Bill Ecenbarger first met his client Monica in 2007 when she was just ten days old and still living in a neo-natal intensive care unit. She was fighting for life, having been born HIV-positive, premature and with cocaine in her system. Monica, now two years old, has suffered developmental setbacks and is still unable to walk on her own. She has had vision surgery and regularly receives speech, occupational and physical therapy, as well as frequent visits with immunologists for her other complicated medical issues.



Despite all of the obstacles in her way, Monica has a fighting chance for one reason - her foster mother, Ms. Blythe. When Monica was just a few weeks old, Ms. Blythe took her home from the NICU. With her tireless help and commitment, Monica is making great strides. Love and care alone are not enough, however. Because of CLC's tenacious advocacy, Monica receives medical assistance to pay for health services that Ms. Blythe cannot otherwise afford. And, with CLC's help, Ms. Blythe recently adopted Monica, promising to fight for Monica's health and well-being forever.

"In my opinion, Ms. Blythe is a super hero," said Bill. "She and her extended family have shown incredible love for Monica. Ms. Blythe is totally committed to Monica and takes excellent care of her special needs and medical issues."

[Read more CLC success stories.](#)

Spotlight: Evelyn Becker CLC Pro Bono Director



Former O'Melveny & Myers partner Evelyn Becker recently joined CLC as the organization's first ever Pro Bono Director. In her new role, Evelyn works closely with more than 70 area law firms to facilitate pro bono representation for hundreds of children in need.

Evelyn practiced employment and complex litigation law for more than 15 years at O'Melveny & Myers. She worked on a wide range of local and national pro bono

matters throughout her career and brings this perspective to her new role at CLC. (Continued on next page)

News from Judith (Continued)

- 1 in 5 adults in DC live in poverty, defined as a family of four living on less than \$22,000 per year;

- Housing in DC is so expensive that a single parent with two children earning minimum wage (\$8.25/hour) must work 135 hours per week just to afford a two-bedroom apartment.

The fact is that the long-term prospects for many children who grow up in the District are bleak. Our young adults do not have the same foundation, support or opportunities as the young people described in Portfolio.com's study.

As the local election season heats up, join CLC in urging the Mayor, DC council members and their challengers to articulate clear and actionable strategies to bridge this divide. Let's push them to make it a priority to rewrite the tale of two cities.

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

April is National Child Abuse Prevention month. There are more than 5,000 abused and neglected children in the District of Columbia. Through our advocacy, CLC successfully preserved \$9 million in DC government funding to prevent child abuse last year.

[Make a donation today](#) and help us to continue our advocacy to prevent abuse and neglect in DC.

CLC Receives Telly Award

Children's Law Center recently received a Telly Award for the organization's 2009 video. The Telly Awards honor the finest video and film productions. Many thanks to Creative Video of Washington's Kirby Whyte and his phenomenal team, who generously produced the video at no cost to CLC.



[Watch our video.](#)

Spotlight: Evelyn Becker CLC Pro Bono Director (Continued)

"I am excited to be part of an organization that does so much to improve the lives of at-risk children living in DC," said Evelyn. "CLC is making a significant investment in pro bono because we recognize the vast pool of talented lawyers at local firms and businesses who can bring even more legal resources to these children."

[Learn about pro bono opportunities with CLC.](#)

CLC Testifies before U.S. Senate and DC Council

The past month has been a busy one for CLC's policy team. To start, Executive Director Judith Sandalow testified at a U.S. Senate hearing regarding the decline in DC foster care adoptions. Judith spoke about the District's failure to prevent child abuse or locate family members of children during times of crises. Fixing these problems, she testified, would reduce the number of children in foster care and allow the District to devote more resources to supporting adoptive families.

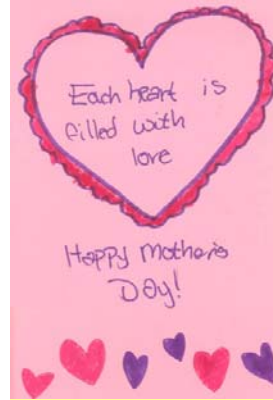


[Read her testimony.](#)

That's not all we did. CLC also testified before the DC Council nearly a dozen times, suggesting amendments to strengthen legislation affecting abused and neglected children and offering our opinion at annual oversight hearings on the state of the five District agencies responsible for child welfare, mental health, education and Medicaid. CLC used the agency oversight hearings as an opportunity to bring attention to the inadequate quality and quantity of mental health services for children. Fixing the fragmented system is a high priority for CLC because our lawyers repeatedly see a lack of children's mental health services result in lengthy stays in foster care, juvenile delinquency and expensive residential and non-public special education placements.

[Learn more about CLC's advocacy for DC's children.](#)

Honor Mothers with a Card from CLC



Mother's Day is May 9th. Honor the mothers in your life with a gift to Children's Law Center. Purchase a card from CLC to be delivered in time for Mother's Day and help us place an abused child in a mother's loving embrace.

[View and purchase your cards today!](#)

Upcoming Events

Custody Guardian Ad Litem Training:

When:

Thursday, May 20, 2010
9:30a.m.-3:30p.m.

Where:

Arnold & Porter
555 12th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Please RSVP to Melanie Jaskolka at
(202) 467-4900 x586 or
mjaskolka@childrenslawcenter.org



Children's Law Center works to give every child in the District of Columbia a solid foundation of family, health and education. We are the largest provider of free legal services in the District and the only to focus on children. Our 70-person staff partners with local pro bono attorneys to serve 1,200 at-risk children each year. We use this expertise to advocate for changes in the District's laws, policies and programs. For more information, visit www.childrenslawcenter.org.