

Children's Champion Newsletter

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

10th Annual *Helping Children Soar* Benefit

Tuesday, September 21, 2010

6:00pm to 9:00pm

Kennedy Center Roof Terrace Restaurant

[Sponsorship opportunities](#) are still available.



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Top 10 Reasons to Do Pro Bono Work

10. **Reconnect with why you became a lawyer.** Representing someone who can't afford a lawyer reconnects you with what law is all about - justice, equality and fair play.

9. **Make your firm look good.** Help your firm to earn a spot on the American Lawyer's A-List or meet the ABA Pro Bono Challenge.

8. **Team up with a colleague or client.** Making a difference in someone's life is a powerful experience, especially when shared with a colleague or client.



News from Judith



Children's Law Center saved two critical children's programs during this year's difficult budget battle by doing what we do best - building relationships, providing accurate, detailed legal analysis, developing persuasive arguments - and refusing to take no for an answer. More than 500 children will stay in safer, stronger families as a result.

With a \$550 million dollar gap between revenue and expenses projected for the District in FY11, CLC knew that the Mayor would require every government agency to cut expenses or find new revenue.

7. **Go to trial.** Some pro bono cases are unlikely to settle, allowing you to first chair a trial.
6. **Settle a case.** Other pro bono cases settle, allowing you to practice a critical skill that is more art than science.
5. **Get out in your community.** Pro bono work is a meaningful way to see first-hand the struggles and triumphs of your fellow residents.
4. **Keep it real.** Taking a pro bono case shifts your perspective - the cost of a simple filing fee could be the same amount that your pro bono client spends on food for a month.
3. **Make a lasting difference.** Pro bono lawyers help children to have a foundation of a safe home, loving family and meaningful education.
2. **It's your professional responsibility.** DC lawyers are expected each year to - at minimum - accept one court appointment, devote 50 hours to pro bono work, or donate \$400 or 1 percent of income earned to a legal services organization like CLC.
1. **It feels great.** You can bring about a measure of stability and hope to a seemingly chaotic and hopeless situation. These are the cases you will tell your grandchildren about.

[Learn more](#) about becoming a pro bono attorney from our website. To discuss available pro bono cases or any questions about taking a case, contact Evelyn Becker at 202.467.4900 x576 or ebecker@childrenslawcenter.org.

A Father's Fight for a Safe Family Home

Holidays like Father's Day and Mother's Day take on special meaning for CLC staff because we see the incredible impact that parents - and those who stand in as parents - make on the lives of children we represent.

One such dedicated dad is Idrissa Munu, who fiercely advocates for the health and safety of his family.

The Munu family lives in a small apartment that can barely contain the vibrancy of two sisters, ages 13 and 7. Mr. Munu often helps the girls with homework while his wife prepares dinner. They keep a tidy home, but could not stop the rats and insects from coming in through gaping holes in their floors and walls.



Haji, 13, and her father (photo: The Washington Post)

After being referred to CLC by their pediatrician at Children's National Medical Center, Mr. Munu worked with staff attorney Kathy Zeisel to ensure that Haji, his eldest daughter who was born with Down Syndrome, had the right allergy medications to keep her healthy and the proper services at school to help her learn.

We advocated with the Mayor's office to make millions of dollars in smart, surgical budget cuts which we identified as having the least detrimental impact on children. We also identified millions of dollars in untapped federal revenue and developed a short list of programs which we believed were essential to protect.

Despite our efforts, when the Mayor's budget was released two of our priority programs had been all but eliminated - the Rapid Housing and Grandparent Caregiver programs.

The Rapid Housing program prevents homelessness and keeps families together. If the Mayor had been successful, approximately 150 families would have lost critical support and approximately 110 older youth leaving foster care would have lost basic financial support, rendering them more vulnerable to homelessness.

The Grandparent Caregiver program helps DC's low-income grandparents raise their grandchildren. The Mayor proposed a dramatic cut of 44 percent - a cut of \$2.77 million - which would have resulted in over 200 children losing fundamental resources.

To save these programs, CLC worked with U.S. Senate staff to secure a letter from the federal Administration for Children and Families explaining how DC could access untapped federal funds. We also:

- Recommended alternative budget cuts to Council members;
- Testified on the record;
- Talked one-on-one with key decision makers;
- Went on WAMU 88.5FM to encourage residents to speak out;
- Worked with coalitions of advocates;
- Cajoled and presented numerous proposals; and
- Sent 11th hour emails to Council staff during the final budget meeting.

The Council listened and both programs were saved - at least for now. CLC will continue to keep tabs on the budget and its implementation and will be ready, once again, to stand up for DC children.

Just weeks after Kathy took the case, Haji was moved to a classroom that better met her needs and got the medications needed to manage her allergies.

Months of pressure from Mr. Munu, Kathy and the DC agency that regulates rental properties resulted in a safer, healthier living environment. Rodent and insect infestations - so common in apartment complexes - were exterminated. Holes in the wall and floors were sealed. The refrigerator, which leaked coolant into their food, was replaced.

Life is better now that their home is a healthier place to live.

None of this would have been possible without Mr. Munu sticking up for his family when he knew that things weren't right. [Read more](#) about the Munu's story in The Washington Post.

Spotlight: Diana Goldberg, Benefit Co-Chair

If there are themes running through Diana Goldberg's life, they might be her dedication to children and commitment to health issues.



Judith Sandalow and Diana Goldberg

She not only raised three children of her own but has cared for countless others through decades of volunteer and philanthropic work.

Diana has served on the board of directors of Children's National Medical Center since 1998, including serving as chairman of the board from 2002 to

to 2005. She is also the co-chair of the Stephen A. and Diana L. Goldberg Foundation.

In 2002, Diana played a key role in funding a new Children's Law Center program, the Health Access Project, and has supported its efforts ever since. In this program, CLC attorneys partner with CNMC doctors to jointly address housing, educational and access to health care issues that impact children's wellbeing.

This year, Diana is co-chair of CLC's annual benefit, a celebration of *Helping Children Soar*, with co-chair May Liang, who is also a board member and treasurer of CLC's board of directors. This year's theme focuses on the impact that the Health Access Project has on hundreds of children and families each year.

Event Invitation

Have you ever wanted professional headshots? Here's your chance! Join us at...

Shoot for Change 10 x 10 Photoshoot

Wednesday, June 23rd
6pm to 9pm
Peacock Cafe
3251 Prospect Street, NW

Local photographer [Walter Grio](#) will shoot 10 professional photos for \$10.



All proceeds benefit CLC.

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DONATE TODAY!

Upcoming Events

Caregiver Representation Pro Bono Training:

When:
Wednesday, June 23, 2010
1pm - 5pm

Where:
Jones Day
51 Louisiana Avenue
Washington, DC 20001

Please **RSVP** to **Melanie Jaskolka** at
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mjaskolka@childrenslawcenter.org