



2012 Annual Report

dc's
**CHILDREN'S
LAW CENTER**



On the Cover:

Malik Yates, a 17-year-old junior at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, drew this portrait of a Washington family. After graduating next year, he plans to attend college to study visual arts, architecture and design, or fashion design. Malik is a client of Children's Law Center.



616 H Street NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20001
www.childrenslawcenter.org

From the Director

dear friends,

Children's Law Center needs a solid foundation of family, health, and education – just as much as the children we serve.



Our education comes from 17 years of serving DC's vulnerable children. Every day, we learn more about the amazing potential they have and how to help them use it.

We are healthy, as this report shows. Our staff is talented and experienced. Our boards are generous and engaged. Our financial situation is solid. Our infrastructure is strong.

You are our family. You, the many individuals who make generous financial contributions personally or on behalf of your law firm, corporation, or foundation. You, the volunteers who provide untold hours of pro bono support. You, the 70 hard-working members of our governing, emeritus, and advisory boards who share your wisdom and serve as our ambassadors. Just like in any other family, we turn to you for help – to pay for the necessities, to work alongside us when a job's too big to do alone, and to get advice when we have hard decisions to make.

It is thanks to you that we have achieved great things in 2012: the release of a blueprint for improving the District's children's mental health system, a full-fledged appellate program, and a revitalized relationship with the new leadership of DC's Child and Family Services Agency, to name just a few. Learn more about these and other highlights from the year in this report. I hope you join me in feeling a sense of accomplishment, but also a sense of responsibility. By working together we can do even more in 2013 for the children who need us most.

Judith Sandalow
Executive Director



About Children's Law Center

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 80-person staff partners with local pro bono attorneys to serve more than 2,000 at-risk children and families each year. We use this expertise to advocate for changes in the District's laws, policies, and programs.

vision and mission

Children's Law Center envisions a future in which every child in the District of Columbia has a solid foundation of family, health, and education. We work toward this vision by providing legal services to at-risk children and their families and by using the knowledge we gain from representing our individual clients to advocate for changes in the law and its implementation. Our practice focuses on children who face instability as a result of abuse, neglect, or parental conflict, as well as children with special education or health needs.

activities

Children's Law Center's programs prevent harm, protect children, and create promising futures through the following activities:

- ◆ Comprehensive legal representation of children and families;
- ◆ Advocacy for laws, policies, and programs that will improve children's lives;
- ◆ A medical-legal partnership to find legal remedies for health issues;
- ◆ A pro bono program which expands our capacity to help children by training, mentoring, and providing case referrals to volunteer lawyers from area law firms;
- ◆ Teaching that empowers parents, caregivers, and children to become better advocates for themselves;
- ◆ Training for doctors, judges, volunteer lawyers, and social workers;
- ◆ A Helpline which provides legal assistance and referral to professionals, caregivers, and children; and
- ◆ An annual Holiday Hope Drive that brightens the season for the families we serve by bringing them clothes, toys, and food.





Clients try on new backpacks donated by Sidley Austin LLP.



Executive director Judith Sandalow and board member Jessica Abrahams present Trisha Hall of McKenna Long & Aldridge with the Helping Hands award.



Advisory board member Elizabeth Richards of Latham & Watkins LLP accepts a pro bono excellence award.



Staff members Joy Purcell and Rebecca Goldfrank and advisory board member George Murphy of Bryan Cave take questions at the summer pro bono panel.



The 100 Hats knitting group at the Federal Trade Commission presents Children's Law Center staff members with hats and gloves made for our Holiday Hope Drive families.



The Healing Power of Love

“Serena’s” mother loved her, but was overwhelmed by caring for her and her two older brothers. One day she was giving 4-month-old Serena a bath, but became distracted and walked away, leaving the hot water running. Serena was hospitalized with serious burns on her legs.

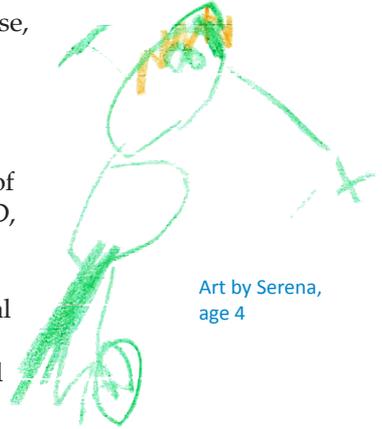
The hospital called the child abuse hotline and a DC family court judge opened a neglect case, placed Serena in foster care, and appointed Kristen Pisani-Jacques, a Children’s Law Center attorney, to represent her best interests. Kristen first talked to Serena’s mother, who admitted she was not able to take care of Serena. Kristen also met Serena’s aunt, Ms. D, who volunteered to help.

Ms. D visited Serena every day at the hospital and showed her dedication by taking over the responsibility for applying the medicated lotion necessary to heal Serena’s burns.

Kristen worked with DC’s child welfare agency to expedite the process to license Ms. D so that Serena would be able to live with her when she left the hospital. Once home Serena flourished, and Ms. D never missed a day applying the lotion. Serena’s doctors credit Ms. D with Serena’s speedy recovery and the minimal scarring that resulted.

Ms. D was committed to raising Serena, but felt that adopting her would be disrespectful to Serena’s birth mother. Kristen explained that guardianship, a form of legally permanent custody, was an alternative to adoption. With Kristen’s support, Ms. D secured a guardianship order. Although the court case was over, Kristen stayed in touch. When Ms. D noticed that Serena wasn’t learning to talk, she asked Kristen for help. Kristen helped Ms. D secure an evaluation and the speech therapy needed to address the delays. That was the boost Serena needed. She has started school and is doing well.

Serena recently celebrated her fourth birthday with a princess party, complete with a fancy crown and a visit from a “real life” princess. It was a special, memorable day. But thanks to Ms. D and Kristen, Serena has the love and the security she needs to feel like a princess every day.



Art by Serena,
age 4



An Appealing Team



Children's Law Center's appellate team: Melissa Colangelo, Allen Snyder, and Sarah Coats

Children's Law Center helps more than 2,000 children and families each year. Our new appellate team, led by special counsel Allen Snyder, provides us with an additional strategy for improving children's lives. Allen joined the staff to build an appellate team after a 30-year career at Hogan and Hartson (now Hogan Lovells) where he chaired the firm's litigation practice group for 15 years. Prior to that, he clerked for two U.S. Supreme Court justices, the Honorable John Marshall Harlan and the Honorable William H. Rehnquist. After retiring, he and his wife served as emergency foster parents, providing a safe and temporary home to 15 children over a period of several years. In 2005 a 2-month-old girl came into their lives, and Allen and his wife say they fell in love with her immediately; they decided to adopt her, and she is now the youngest of their three daughters.

Allen's professional and personal experience made him an ideal match for Children's Law Center. He is responsible for developing an organization-wide appellate strategy as well as providing counsel on individual cases. Allen and his team often get involved in case strategy even before a lawyer enters the courtroom on a new case and stay involved all the way through the appeal. They are increasingly consulted by staff and pro bono attorneys alike and, since their arrival, Children's Law Center has been asked by the Court of Appeals to act as *amicus curiae* in several complex family law cases.

Joining Allen are staff appellate counsel Melissa Colangelo and paralegal Sarah Coats. Before joining Children's Law Center, Melissa clerked for the Honorable John Fisher of the DC Court of Appeals. Sarah worked for McKenna Long & Aldridge and The Michele Zavos Law Group.



Highlighting Education and

Education was the theme at Children's Law Center's 2012 Helping Children Soar Benefit, held at the Kennedy Center Roof Terrace Restaurant in September and attended by more than 400 people. Front and center was Sky Stringer, a 10-year-old Children's Law Center client who acted as emcee. Sky's mother took the stage to share how they had struggled together to overcome Sky's dyslexia and ADHD, and their relief once they found Children's Law Center and a lawyer was able to connect Sky with the right special education services. To put Sky's story in perspective, there were informational



Executive director Judith Sandalow and Benefit emcee Sky Stringer present the Children's Pro Bono Champion award to Arnold and Porter Chairman Tom Milch.



Benefit Emcee Sky Stringer, front, with Laura Molinari, Tina Shaughnessy, Kathleen Palma, and Aimee Imundo of General Electric



Honoring Pro Bono Excellence

activities around the room – a page on understanding dyslexia, a wheel of facts about child development, and a set of true-and-false flashcards on the state of education in the District.

General Electric Company and Arnold & Porter LLP received the 2012 Children’s Pro Bono Champion Award. They were honored for their successful partnership to represent children in need of special education services. In accepting the award, GE senior counsel Aimee Imundo used her personal experience to highlight the importance of this pro bono work. “My son had me, but I came to realize not every child should have to have a lawyer in the family,” she said. Arnold & Porter chairman Tom Milch accepted the award on behalf of his firm and spoke about the obligation the legal profession has to ensure access to justice for all DC residents.

Sky helped executive director Judith Sandalow present Aimee and Tom with their awards. Arnold & Porter has been a pro bono champion for the District’s children for years. Their commitment took a new form when they teamed up with their client, GE, to handle special education matters referred through Children’s Law Center’s medical-legal partnership, Healthy Together.



Co-chair Elizabeth Downes with Joyce Wasserstein and Ted Segal

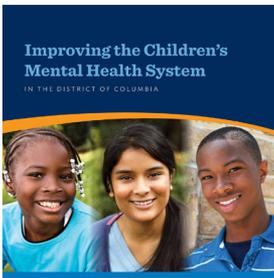
Co-chair Evan Farber with past co-chair and fellow board member Joe Figini



Focused to Improve

The District and its children pay a high price for our inadequate children's mental health system: beyond the personal suffering of children and families, the price is paid in the cost of special education, foster care, juvenile justice, and other social services. Based on comparisons to national statistics, there are at least 5,000 children in DC who do not receive the mental health treatment they need. Improving the District's children's mental health system is Children's Law Center's top policy priority.

On May 9, 2012, Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, Children's Law Center released *Improving the Children's Mental Health System in the District of Columbia*, a policy plan with 32 specific, practical recommendations. The plan draws from Children's Law Center's extensive experience advocating for children in foster care and children with special education and health care needs. Recommendations focus on prevention and early identification of mental health problems as well as on addressing the financial and structural issues which deter high quality mental health providers from working with at-risk children and which confuse parents trying to access services.



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Children's Mental Health

"No matter how we meet a child, because a judge appoints us in a child abuse matter or a pediatrician refers a parent to us, the difficulty accessing mental health services is the single greatest barrier to helping that child," said executive director Judith Sandalow.

A standing-room-only crowd attended the launch event at Children's National Medical Center.

Two mothers shared moving stories of their experiences trying to access mental health services for their sons. Other speakers

included Beatriz "BB" Otero, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and Kurt Newman, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of Children's National Medical Center. *The Washington Post* previewed the plan's release in an article May 9. After the launch, a *Post* editorial recognized Children's Law Center as "a leading advocacy group for at-risk children" and called the plan's recommendations "logical next steps" for the District.

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

EDITORIALS

Easing troubled minds



James Ulmer, his mother Bessie, and executive director Judith Sandalow at the plan's launch on May 9, 2012

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District of Columbia Bar Foundation
The Eric D. and Steven D. Hovde Foundation
Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation
Five-Strings Charitable Funds
Fletcher Family Foundation
Freddie Mac Foundation

The Hy and Myra Shapiro Foundation
Mary and Daniel Loughran Foundation
The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.
The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
Prince Charitable Trusts
The Rapoport Family Foundation
The Share Fund
SunTrust Foundation
United Way of the National Capital Area



Financial Statement

assets

Current assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$783,392
Cash and cash equivalents - restricted	\$113,914
Certificates of deposit	\$914,920
Total cash and cash equivalents	\$1,812,226

Receivables

Contracts receivable	\$1,668,725
Contributions and grants receivable	\$37,137
Annual event receivable	\$41,749
Total receivables	\$1,747,611
Prepaid expenses	\$143,185
Other current assets	\$1,332

Total current assets \$3,704,354

Property and equipment, net \$123,303

Total assets \$3,827,657

liabilities and net assets

Current liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$149,549
Deferred revenue	-

Total current liabilities \$149,549

Net assets

Unrestricted	\$3,424,216
Temporarily restricted	\$253,892

Total net assets \$3,678,108

Total liabilities and net assets \$3,827,657

Calculations as of September 30, 2012



