

CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

March 2011 Newsletter

The Campaign for Youth Justice is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing, and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Oregon "Safe Kids, Safer Communities" Bill Moves Forward

On Friday, March 19, 2011, the House Judiciary Committee voted overwhelmingly in favor of HB 2707, the "Safe Kids, Safer Communities" bill, to keep youth out of jails. House Bill 2707 is expected to be heard on the House floor soon.

For additional information on the "Safe Kids, Safer Communities" bill, read the Partnership for Safety & Justice's issue brief at:

http://www.safetyandjustice.org/files/Safe%20Kids%20Safer%20Communitites%20FINAL_0.pdf

Testimony to the D.C. Council Judiciary Committee

This month, CFYJ submitted testimony to the DC Judiciary Committee as part of an oversight hearing of the D.C. Department of Corrections (DOC).

Key recommendations in the testimony included:

- Immediately prohibit the use of solitary confinement, excessive use of isolation and other dangerous practices by the DOC at the Juvenile Unit of CTF.
- Create a community stakeholder committee, including parents and families of youth currently or formerly at CTF and/or the D.C. Jail, to advise your committee and the new Mayor on DOC issue a monthly basis.
- Establish an independent monitoring capacity in a local non-profit organization with 24 hour access to CTF to ensure the safety and appropriate care of the youth at the Juvenile Unit at CTF, to receive complaints, and to report on the status of these youth monthly to this committee.
- Reintroduce legislation to revise the "transfer" law to reduce the number of youth prosecuted in adult court by having all transfer cases be heard by a judge (i.e. eliminating the U.S. Attorney's authority to prosecute youth as adults or by providing a "Reverse Waiver" authority for adult court judges to send youth back to the juvenile court).
- Support changes for the District in federal legislation, such as: Require the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to report on the placement of DC youth once in the BOP system; Increase monitoring of the BOP's placement and treatment of DC youth; Require the U.S. Attorneys Office and the Supreme Court to provide comprehensive and regular data on youth prosecuted as adults; and Increase and improve legal representation & advocacy for youth prosecuted in adult criminal court including requiring attorneys representing youth charged as adults to attend training.

For a full copy of the testimony, please visit: <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/other-testimony.html>.

North Carolina Update

Over 300 parents, grandparents, children, youth, advocates, service providers, teachers and friends came out to the General Assembly in force on March 15th to advocate for critical children's programs and services and called on the General Assembly to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 16 to 18 youth. Attendees visited their legislators and key legislative leaders throughout the morning, advocating on behalf of children's programs and services. A press event in the middle of the day highlighted parents and children who benefit from some of these programs. To see photos, please visit our website at www.ncchild.org and click on "About Us," then "Events" to see photos!

A note from the Mississippi Youth Justice Project:

Hello to all,

We have recently partnered with Color of Change on our Walnut Grove Campaign. This petition calls on the state of Mississippi to cancel the contract with the GEO Group, the private prison company that runs Walnut Grove Youth Correctional Facility. GEO is poised to make over

\$1 billion this year while our clients, the young people imprisoned in this facility, live in horribly abusive conditions-conditions that were created in large part by the greed of the various corporations that profit from imprisoning Mississippi's young people. I hope you will consider signing the petition and passing it along to your networks.

Thank you.

To view and sign the petition, please visit <http://act.colorofchange.org/sign/geo>.

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FEDERAL UPDATE



Sign on to Eliminate Prison Rape

Join the hundreds of individuals and organizations banding together to help eliminate prison rape by removing juveniles from adult prisons. SIGN ON to the letter below by sending your name, title or affiliation, and state you live in to jicampaign@cfyj.org. We'd appreciate your circulating this to groups and individuals in your network as well.

Let's keep our youth safe! <http://ht.ly/4qiuk>. We appreciate your time and consideration.

Urge the Obama Administration to Appoint a Permanent OJJDP Administrator

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, it has been more than two years since President Obama was inaugurated and no permanent Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has been appointed. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is the federal agency responsible for juvenile justice and delinquency prevention issues, and is tasked with assisting state and local governments in addressing juvenile delinquency.

Over the past decade, OJJDP suffered a drastic depletion of funding and support, and the agency's commitment to the most important issues confronting youth has diminished. It is crucial that the Administration provide leadership, clear direction and resources to assist States create and sustain juvenile justice systems that cost less, enhance public safety and treat court-involved youth appropriately.

We urge you to take action and spread the word on this important issue!

For individuals, please consider signing the petition below:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/make-juvenile-justice-a-priority-appoint-an-ojjdpadministrator>.

For organizations, please consider signing onto the national, state & local organizational sign on letter to the OJJDP Administrator by emailing organizer@cfyj.org by April 8, 2011.

National, State & Local Organizational Sign-on Letter

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and individuals, we are writing to urge you to make juvenile justice a priority by appointing a permanent Administrator to lead the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention.

As you enter the third year of your Administration, an entire community of juvenile justice professionals, and the young people and families we serve, remain without an Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). OJJDP is the only federal agency responsible for federal leadership regarding juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, and it is also tasked with assisting State and local governments in grappling with these complex issues.

Over the past decade, OJJDP suffered a drastic depletion of funding and support, and the agency's ability to address the most important issues confronting youth crime and justice has necessarily diminished. It is crucial and long overdue, that your Administration provide leadership, direction, cost-effective solutions and resources to assist States and communities across the nation as we enhance public safety, promote the rule of law, provide diversion and court-based services, operate detention and corrections facilities, and treat court-involved youth in accordance with developmentally sound principles and practices.

We stand ready to partner with your Administration to ensure a balanced and fair juvenile justice system, but we will not be able to advance or sustain progress without a strong and viable Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Please appoint a seasoned and experienced juvenile justice Administrator who can lead our country's juvenile justice system immediately.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Your Name/Organization

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RESEARCH AND POLICY

New Report Published on Juveniles in the Texas Criminal Justice System

This month, a new report, "Juveniles in the Adult Criminal Justice System in Texas" (LBJ School of Public Affairs, 2011) authored by Michele Deitch, Senior Lecturer at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the University of Texas School of Law was released. The report provides a comprehensive look at Texas's methods for dealing with the state's most serious juvenile offenders. It gathers all available Texas data with respect to certified juveniles—those youth who are transferred to adult criminal court—and compares them to the population of determined sentence juveniles who are retained in the juvenile justice system. The report also compares significant differences in programming and services for the two populations of juvenile offenders—those who get sent to adult jails and prisons, and those who receive placements in the Texas Youth Commission.

The report and its findings are especially timely during the Texas Legislature's ongoing effort to restructure the state's juvenile justice system, and are consistent with the direction that juvenile justice reform has taken in the state since 2007.

Among the report's most significant findings are:

- It breaks down the common myths about which juveniles get transferred to the adult system. They are not the "worst of the worst"—in fact, they are almost identical to youth who stay in the juvenile system in terms of criminality. What's more, it is far from the case that they are all chronic, violent felons who are beyond the help of the juvenile system: 29% are first-time offenders; 15% have committed a non-violent offense; and 72% have no prior violent criminal history. Only 17% have committed some form of homicide.
- The main difference between those juveniles who get transferred to the adult criminal justice system and those who stay in the juvenile system is what county they come from. Harris County, in particular, disproportionately certifies juveniles as adults, whereas Travis and El Paso counties rarely use this option, preferring to instead rely on the tough but more rehabilitative options in the juvenile system.
- The vast majority of juveniles transferred to the adult system have never been through the toughest options the juvenile system has to offer, including sentences of up to 40 years. 89% of certified youth have never even been to TYC. That means they have not been able to participate in programs like the Capital and Serious

Violent Offender Program at the Giddings TYC Facility, an intense therapeutic intervention that has a 95% success rate. Given the flexibility of the determinate sentencing option and its ability to hold youth account while protecting public safety, it makes no sense that juvenile judges are bypassing this option in so many ca

- Juveniles who get tried as adults in Texas are held in adult jails while awaiting trial and in adult prison aft conviction. These facilities are a really poor fit for youth, and put them at extreme risk for suicide, mental health problems, sexual assault, and physical assault. Many juveniles age 14 - 17 languish in isolation for periods of a year or more. The adult facilities have limited specialized programming for these youth, unlike juvenile system with its effective rehabilitative programming, and in many cases the youth are co-mingled wi adult offenders. Research shows that youth held in adult prisons and jails have 100% greater risks of violen recidivism than those held in juvenile facilities.

- A significant number of states have policies that allow juveniles tried in adult court to be housed in juver facilities, including Virginia and Pennsylvania, which adopted such policies in 2010.

The report offers a number of policy recommendations to better serve the needs of serious juvenile offende in Texas and to protect public safety through improved outcomes.

The report is available for download on the LBJ School website at: <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/news/2011-school-publishes-report-juveniles-texas-adult-criminal-j>.

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NATIONAL MOMENTUM

National Resolution Sign On Update

The Campaign for Youth Justice continues to promote the national resolution to reduce the number of you sent to adult criminal court and to remove youth from adult jails and prisons.

Currently, more than 190 organizations have signed on to the National Resolution. Over fifty national organizations as well as organizations from forty-three states across the nation have shown their commitme to keeping young people out of the adult criminal justice system. Now, the goal is to gain signatories in all fi states! As such, the Campaign would like to build on the already tremendous support for the Resolution by inviting your organization to sign today!

If your organization has not signed on to the Resolution, please consider doing so today. To sign-on to the Resolution, contact the Campaign at jjstate@cfyj.org.

The text of the National Resolution and list of current signatories is available at: http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/National_Resolution_plus_supporters_2_25_11.pdf.

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MEDIA WRAP

New *State Trends* Report Released

This month on Juvenile Justice Matters, we focused our attention on the recent report released by Campaign for Youth Justice, titled *State Trends: Legislative Changes from 2005 to 2010 Removing Youth from the Adult Crimina*

Justice System. The report provides state policymakers, the media, the public, and advocates with the latest information about youth in the adult justice system.

The first half of the report explains the dangers to youth, public safety, and the overall prosperity of our economy and future generations. The second half of the report examines 27 positive pieces of legislation enacted in 15 states during the last 5 years, as well as highlights active reform efforts underway.



We began by speaking to the author of the report, Neelum Arya, research and policy director at the Campaign for Youth Justice. She presented a staggering statistic that there are "approximately 250,000 kids who are tried as adults each year." While Arya believes the sheer magnitude of this number should speak for itself, she also maintains that perhaps the most troubling reality is that "we are saddling these kids with adult convictions for the rest of their lives."

Arya's *State Trends* Report, however, shows that "there has been significant progress [over the past five years removing youth from the adult system]." The report highlights a number of pieces of progressive legislation enacted throughout the country from 2005 to 2010, and gives advocates of juvenile justice reform optimism that these progressive trends will continue.

In addition to Arya, we interviewed Kim Dvorchak, Executive Director of the Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition, and State Senator Floyd McKissick of North Carolina. We sat down with them and allowed them speak about the successes, challenges and current discourse of juvenile justice reform in their respective states.

Dvorchak began her portion of the program by assuring that the state of youth justice in Colorado is "securely moving forward." And, considering how Colorado was featured in three of the four positive trends listed in *State Trends* Report (the most of any state), that assessment is accurate. In fact, in the past five years, Colorado has both changed its' transfer laws, making it more likely youth will remain in the juvenile justice system, as well as successfully passed legislation which limits the states' ability to house youth in adult jails and prisons, putting Colorado at the forefront of juvenile justice reform.

When asked what the next step for securing youth rights in Colorado is, Dvorchak points to assuring the Juvenile Life Without Parole Bill is enacted retroactively. The legislation allows juveniles who have been sentenced to life behind bars to be eligible for parole after 40 years. If the 2006 law is allowed to be implemented retroactively, it would immediately affect 47 prisoners in Colorado who were sentenced to life without parole as juveniles before 2006.

Finally, State Senator Floyd McKissick sat down and spoke to us about the state of juvenile justice reform in North Carolina. We asked McKissick, who has served on North Carolina's Youth Accountability Task Force about the state's policy of automatically charging 16 and 17 year olds as adults. McKissick concedes that "we've been a bit caught in the dark ages on these issues. It's unfortunate that we find ourselves in this position but in a position that we are working aggressively to change." McKissick goes on to acknowledge that North Carolina's policy - which is one of only two states which still employ it - is detrimental to the state. He claims they're finding that "if [juveniles] do end up in the adult system and become incarcerated with adults, the recidivism rate is far greater. They're almost twice as likely to end up repeating some type of criminal offense." He also adds that the adult criminal record which often accompanies juveniles affected by the policy taints the young offenders and makes it difficult for them to even "go to a McDonald's or a Wal-Mart and get a job."

Towards the end of the program, McKissick posits "Of the juveniles that were [in the adult system today], roughly about 94% of those 16 and 17 years olds are accused of non-violent crimes, and 79% of them are accused of misdemeanors, 18% are accused of low-level, non-violent felonies that are not sexually-oriented

offenses, and there's only about 3% that are actually accused of serious felonies. And if you can take that 94 out there that really don't need to be in that adult system and you can keep them in the juvenile system, it has just all types of benefits."

To listen to this and many other archived shows, please visit www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters.

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GET ORGANIZED

Film Screenings: A Great Tool for Organizing Your Community

Grace Bauer, a field organizer, joined the Campaign for Youth Justice in 2008. She has worked to unite the parents and allies of children to change laws and practices that result in children being prosecuted and confined as adults.



As organizers, we are always looking for the people that are looking for us. We know that there are plenty of people who believe that children do not belong in cages; we are looking for those people to join us in our fight to change the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. Film screenings are an easy and fun way to find the people in your community.

What film/films could I show?

"Childhood Interrupted Volume 2"

This is a free video produced by the Campaign for Youth Justice. The video is short and comes with a discussion guide for engaging the people that attend after the video.

"Justice for All"

A short film that shows the results of a comprehensive 3 year study of young people involved in systems around the country. You can purchase the video by going to <http://www.justiceforallthemovie.com/>

"The Farm" and "The Farm: 10 Down"

Two intensely moving films about the Angola State Penitentiary in the deep rural south of Louisiana. Can be purchased at <http://highestcommondenominator.bigcartel.com/>

There are many other films about prison and prison life that you can get from video rental stores or rent from your local library.

Where do I show the film?

The answer depends on how many people you are comfortable with. The more you feel comfortable with, the larger the space you need. This need not be an expense to you; many places will offer space at no cost for community events like these. A few places to consider:

- Your living room
- Local library
- Recreation centers
- Churches

How do I let others know about the film screening?

- Put up flyers around the neighborhood where you plan to show the film
- Church newsletter
- Public Service Announcements (these are free of charge in many newspapers and news stations)
- Put up a flyer at the local jail, prison or detention center
- Put up flyers at the courthouse or at stores near the courthouse if they will not allow you to post it at the court
- Send flyers to your local National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)
- Send flyer to local providers of services for children who are at-risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system

What do I do at the meeting?

Introduce yourself and let people know why you decided to have this film screening. It is helpful to offer light snacks and drinks but if you can't afford to do this, don't let that stop you. Have a sign in sheet so that people can leave you with their contact information for any future events you may hold. You can also contact us at the Campaign for Join the Movement kits that include a "Childhood Interrupted" video, a bracelet and a Take Action Guide.

You don't have to stop when this event ends. Think about holding other film screenings or community meetings to raise awareness about our children behind bars and to jump start discussions in your community for reform of these systems. We, at the Campaign, have years of expertise on organizing in your community and we are happy to help you figure out all the details of holding a film screening or other community meetings. Give us a call!

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VOICES

Ray went to adult prison at age 16. He is now 30 years old. This is his story...

"I was incarcerated at the age of 16. Now, at the age of 30, I am a very different person. With this maturity of age comes reflection; I have come to realize that my crime was perpetrated in part because of my circumstances on a larger scale than just the influence of the older misguided individuals involved. It has become apparent that my crime was formulated from the onset because of factors such as lack of education, no spiritual background, and the heavy influence of an anti-social environment.



In my childhood, I witnessed-and as times progressed became a target of-my father's violent temper. I believe that this was due to an excessive amount of drinking and his own turbulent upbringing. The violence was so bad that, at times, it left my mother unable to go to work and often kept me and my sisters from going to school.

This established a personal rift between myself and my immediate family, which by the time I was 12, had become the size of the Grand Canyon. It is hardly a surprise when children under this sort of pressure resort to committing acts of crime in society, gang violence being the most common. Most youth in gangs-or as they called in D.C., "Crews"-are the victims of some form of abuse at home. Being a youth, I found that void ended up being filled by drugs and gang life on the streets.

I am a first time offender with no convictions as a juvenile. This is my only adult conviction. I realize that the only way of showing remorse is to change. What I have come to realize while incarcerated in the adult system

so young is that you can punish a child all the way into nonexistence so that what is left is just an adult. To take a child away so young-without the proper rehabilitation-is worth the question, "What kind of an adult is left? Sometimes some degree of incarceration is necessary. However, harsh prosecution of juveniles only leads to more of the behaviors the legislature claims to be attempting to eradicate. Juveniles should only be incarcerated in an environment where systemic training is in place to benefit the child aiding in his or her eventual rehabilitation and release.

My time in prison has not been squeaky clean. I have gotten into altercations for my own survival, and am [?] working on how to control my temper. Although there are negatives about me, there are also positives. I have obtained my GED, I am an avid reader, and appear to have a penchant for philosophy.

In 1997, I wasn't even given a chance; I was put into prison and told to survive. There was no consideration that I had just become a father of a child [who is now 13]. Maybe, if given the opportunity to change, I would have changed for her, if not for anyone else."

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ON THE CALENDAR

Mark Your Calendars for some Upcoming Events!

April 5, 2011- 5:00-7:00 p.m.: Look Inside Art Exhibit, Parachute Factory in New Haven, Connecticut



Think you know? Look Inside is an art exhibit that gives these young people a chance to tell their stories. We'll be featuring visual pieces by children in secure facilities and community programs. We also display their poetry. Kids tell us that art helps them handle feelings of anger and sadness. Yet, they often have no opportunities to develop their creativity in their home communities.

The Parachute Factory is on Peck Street in New Haven, CT 06513.

April 15-17, 2011: Global Youth Service Day

Global Youth Service Day is an annual campaign that celebrates and mobilizes the millions of children and youth who improve their communities each day of the year through service and service-learning. Established in 1988, Global Youth Service Day is the largest service event in the world, and is the only day of service dedicated to children and youth. GYSD is celebrated each year in over 100 countries.

Each year, millions of children and youth around the world work together with schools, youth organizations, non-profits, community and faith-based organizations, volunteer and national service programs, government agencies, faith communities, and other individuals to address the world's most critical issues and change their communities on Global Youth Service Day.

For more information contact:

www.GYSD.org.

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TAKE ACTION, SPREAD THE WORD

Host a march!

Taking to the streets is a great way to inform others about your cause and gain exposure as a campaign. Ho your own march as a fundraiser and get your children involved. Have them make signs or hold a t-shirt designing contest for the march. Be sure to have flyers ready with key facts and contacts to get more people involved.

Checklist:

- Plan a route for the march in advance and clear it with your local precinct. You may need to get permits ar few escorts. Make sure you give them a secure route that won't interfere with major traffic areas (entrances t highways etc.). Permits may be more easily obtained if you walk along the sidewalk, you may also choose to march around a schoolyard, track, or parking lot if it is easier.
- Consider using a sound system to routinely announce facts about your cause or have stops along the way where people can give testimony and speak about your issue.
- Write out a fact sheet to read and plan who will speak at each stop (plan for about 5 stops along your route depending on your time constraints you may want to have more or less).
- Have people wear the same color, design a t-shirt, and/or hold signs or a banner. This will make your grou (or hopefully your crowd) noticeable and cohesive as you walk down the street.
- Create flyers with facts on your issue and contact information to give out to curious pedestrians and spread word and have more people informed about your campaign.
- You may consider having one of the stops at the juvenile courts in your town and the last stop where peop can convene and ask questions.

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HOW YOU CAN HELP



How You Can Help

We are encouraged by the recent wins and progress underway in a number of states as shown in the newly released *State Trends* report. The momentum mu continue! With your help, we can expand grassroots campaigns on the ground new states to show support for reform to reduce the prosecution of youth in adult criminal court and to end the placement of youth in adult jails and priso.

Help us launch campaigns in new states in 2011 by donating \$5, \$50, or \$500!

To donate, please click here:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/donate.html>.

Let's work together to stop the inhumane, unjust, and ineffective policies affecting youth across the country

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

Goal Setting: A Campaign Approach to Ending the Practice of Prosecuting Youth as Adults

Liz Ryan

We are asked regularly why we take a campaign approach to ending the practice of prosecuting youth in adu courts and thought we'd start a series of conversations in our newsletter to discuss all the various aspects of

"campaign."

As part of your campaign strategy, you will need to set goals for your campaign. Here are a few key steps:

1) Think Big and Bold!

Consider what it is that you really want your campaign to accomplish. You are focusing on how to make significant reductions in the prosecution of youth in adult court, so what 'goal' would have the most impact? Don't limit your thinking at this stage in the process. Consider the biggest and boldest goals as your long-term goals, and then consider medium and short term goals that will help you get there.

2) What is a "Win"?

In addition to setting big and bold goals to accomplish in the long-term, you will need to consider what a "win" is at every stage of your campaign. If your campaign was able to get a new law passed to substantially limit types of cases automatically prosecuted in adult court, you could consider that a "win."

3) Use the SMART Goal "test"

One way to think about setting your goals for your campaign is to use the SMART Goal "test" with the goal you establish.

SMART stands for:

S: Specific

M: Measurable

A: Achievable

R: Results-oriented

T: Time-specific

As you consider setting your campaign goals, you will need to ask whether the goals you set are specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and time-specific.

4) Take a Look Around

See what other campaigns have accomplished and what goals they set. Did they accomplish what they set out to do? How long did it take? What were the long-term, medium-term and short-term goals that they set? What do they consider a "win" at each stage of their campaign? And would they change the goals they set upon reflection? For contacts in states working to reduce the prosecution of youth in adult criminal court, visit: <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/parents-resource-center/find-your-state-contacts.html>.

5) Organize a Brainstorming Session

One of the best ways to figure out how to set goals that will work for your campaign is to organize a brainstorming session with your group. Bring the tools and information you have learned about to your session. Set an objective for the session, such as establishing mutually agreed upon goals for your campaign. To inspire your group, consider sharing information from other successful campaigns or inviting a campaign organizer from a nearby state to talk about his/her experiences. Be sure to involve everyone in your group in the preparation for the session and the follow up activities afterward.

Please share your feedback, comments and ideas on this article! We'd also like to know what questions you have about campaigns and what topics you'd like to see in future articles.

Please contact Liz Ryan at: lryan@cfyj.org. For previous articles, visit the campaign resource center at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/advocacy-resource-center.html>.

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CFYJ WELCOMES NEW STAFF

Leah Robertson, Communications Associate

Leah is a recent graduate of Johns Hopkins University and has a background in social justice and rehabilitation. She was a leader at STAND!, a mentor project which pairs college students with first and second time juvenile offenders in Baltimore city in order to develop long-term relationships based on mentoring, tutoring and friendship and ultimately decrease the violence and legal troubles of youth in Baltimore city. She was also a Production Assistant for See you Soon Again, a documentary feature film that explores that nature and methods of tolerance education through the life-story of a Viennese Holocaust survivor and the students with whom he interacts. She eventually intends to pursue a career in justice policy and youth development. She assists in the development of communications strategies, specializing in social media and website administration in addition to managing special projects.

Grace Warren, National Parent Caucus Co-Director

Grace is the Co-Director and a Family Organizer for the National Parent Caucus (NPC). In her leadership with the NPC she will provide timely advocacy and peer-to-peer support among its members. Her first involvement as an advocate for reform of the criminal justice system was in 2004 when she became a member of the Tamms Year Ten Campaign which is focused on Prison Reform. In 2007, she began working with the Illinois Coalition for Fair Sentencing of Children at Northwestern University. This is a project working to end the practice of sentencing children under the age of 18 to life without the possibility of parole in Illinois. Grace's son was 17 years old when he was sent to the adult criminal justice system. As a result she is determined to increase public awareness about the existence and injustice of juveniles tried, sentenced, and incarcerated as adults.

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