

CAMPAIGN FOR
YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

GET ORGANIZED

A Monthly Column by Grace Bauer – November 2010

Open Letter to the National Parent Caucus and our Families

Grace Bauer

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.

Where does the time go? It seems hard to believe but another year has just about come and gone! We have certainly had a very busy year and much work has been accomplished! Take a moment and feel good about the things you have accomplished and know that our movement has grown significantly this past year! Family voice has been more evident at the national level than ever before and that voice will create positive changes for our children.



I get very emotional when the holidays approach because I know that many of you will hurt for your children that are locked up and on special days there will always be that absence around our tables and in our hearts for those that remain imprisoned and for some, lost to us in death. My son has spent six of the last 10 years behind bars and though I am holding out hope that this year will be different, I remember how hard those six were for us as his family. No matter how great your joy is for others in your life, a heart wrenching emptiness accompanies you in your every waking moment and then haunts you when you try to close your eyes. On special days it seems harder and the void seems even greater. To all of you who know and understand the pain, we send our strongest thoughts and care.

I have no words to take away the sorrow and hurt that millions of families will be feeling in the coming weeks but I refuse to only acknowledge that part of our lives. We, as families, have made progress this year and this progress should be celebrated. I know that our progress will not fill the void in your hearts but I hope that you will feel a sense of achievement and know that we are making a difference for our children. The National Parent Caucus now reaches families in over 30 states and 180 people participate through our monthly calls, emails, requesting materials to educate themselves and their communities, writing letters and making phone calls.

Representatives of the National Parent Caucus have been in one meeting with the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention leaders and another will take place on December 6th to talk about plans to involve more families in more intensive ways. The Family Justice Act is moving along. The 5K Race for Youth Justice, that Tracy McClard started three years ago, spread to four other states this year and it is expected to triple in 2011. Many families from throughout the country have stepped up to spread the message and be the voice for our children in their states, including Vicky Gunderson, Ernest Johnson, Grace Warren, Tracey Huggins-Clark, Rita Pearson, Anne Williams and so many more. We have Sadric Bonner, Geraldine Alshamy and Ruth Foster fighting to "Raise the Age" in North Carolina. Our sincere appreciation goes out to all of you for all that you do!

I would like to encourage all of you to reach out to other families in similar situations and let them know they are not alone. Do not let the sorrow and hurt you feel keep you silenced, use those feelings to keep making noise and bringing attention to the obstacles and hardships our children face. Please remember that you are making a difference!