



The Progress Report



Issue 10 · Fall 2008

Delivering “Nuts and Bolts” Education Law to Parents

During late 2007 and the first half of 2008, attorneys at Robinson & Cole LLP and Day Pitney LLP devoted over 300 pro bono hours to create handbooks on parents’ legal rights in the public education system. These recently-completed guides address topics on which parents expressed a desire for further information during our 2007 series of Parent Engagement/No Child Left Behind workshops in Connecticut’s 5 largest urban centers. These topics are:

- Special Education after the PPT Process
- Your Legal Rights and School District Responsibilities
- Bullying 101: The Law & Your Child
- The Nuts and Bolts of How Your School District is Funded
- Zero Tolerance and Your Child’s Legal Rights

Our project’s goal is that our legal guides and related “Ask a Lawyer” parent forums catalyze positive parent behavior on their child’s behalf. Parents whose children are having problems with the school system many times feel isolated and frustrated. They aren’t familiar with the legal/bureaucratic process or aware of how they can work with schools and school districts to ensure that their child gets the resources and support that they need.

Appleseed has already seen our booklets put to good use by Teach Our Children, a New Haven-based and parent-led advocacy organization. Specifically, Teach Our Children used our legal guides to educate district officials on recent bullying laws and to advocate for more effective disciplinary policies. Because of the strategic partnerships we have formed with related parent organizations across the state such

as Connecticut Parent Power and the Connecticut PTA, we have every reason to expect that our new booklets will help empower parents across the state to take positive action on behalf of their children.

Appleseed is targeting dissemination of our booklets to parents of school age children in several particular parts of Connecticut, including state-funded Family Resource Centers which support families and promote child development services from within the public schools, because of their strong connections with families and children. Our goal is to disseminate our set of 5 legal guides to at least 75% of the Family Resource Centers in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford and other urban centers.

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Appleseed Co-Sponsors Senior Citizens Law Day II in November

Born 3 years ago in a symposium at Quinnipiac University’s School of Law, Connecticut Appleseed’s Elder Law project has helped almost 900 seniors of modest means to better understand their legal rights and entitlements and to assess their legal needs. At the June, 2005 “Senior Citizens Law Day”, experts in Elder Law gave free seminars related to Advance Directives, Wills and Trusts, Long-term Health Care and Prescription Drug Costs, Housing and Consumer Fraud. Appleseed then launched our project by distilling the information presented into our “Connecticut Elder Law Resources” book, which we have since been distributing in a workshop setting at senior centers across the state.

Law Day II on November 15th in Hamden - Open to the Public

Appleseed Board member and Quinnipiac Law School Dean Brad Saxton recently reassembled his team of volunteer legal experts to plan Law Day II, which will be a catalyst for the review and revision of Connecticut Elder Law Resources. To be held again at Quinnipiac, with a free lunch provided, Law Day II will again feature many of the pro bono attorneys who authored chapters in the original resource book. With Dean Saxton’s encouragement, these volunteers agreed to collaborate again to develop the new edition. This time, our plans include translating the updated version into Spanish so that we can broaden the book’s distribution and better serve the needs of the state’s diverse senior population.

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Mission Statement

Our Mission is to develop solutions for the causes, rather than the symptoms, of our state's social problems. We will deploy volunteer lawyers and other professionals to achieve systemic changes through legal and legislative advocacy, negotiation, education and other initiatives.



Connecticut Appleseed

Bob Kettle
Executive Director

phone 203 210-5356
web www.ctappleseed.org



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\$100,000 Gift Boosts CLICC

An extraordinary 2008 gift is enabling one of our most promising and anticipated public-private initiatives to take a huge step forward. More than 20 incarcerated parents at the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury, CT., attended a recent information meeting about our pilot “Connecting through Literacy: Incarcerated Parents, Children and Caregivers” program, then signed up to participate. As a result, we are preparing to begin the program in late October with as many as 25 incarcerated parents.

Our three-year-old effort is designed to connect incarcerated parents who will be leaving prison within one year and their families, healing stressed relationships and supporting their successful re-entry to society. A central component is literacy training, reading and emailed-based discussions about books to improve communications between parents/caregivers and their children age 8 to 14, while enhancing the computer skills that are so important in the job market.

Under our program, parents and children will communicate for six months by mail and through “TRULINC”, a secure e-mail system developed by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons and tested as a result of our CLICC initiative. “TRULINC’s” development was an absolutely critical milestone, as a large percentage of those incarcerated in Danbury have children who live great distances from the prison.

Mentors are also particularly key to the program. Children will work with an e-mentor, with whom they can form the trusting, stable relationships that can help ensure positive learning experiences. In addition, a separate set of volunteer mentors will meet with the participating parents twice a week at the prison to encourage effective parenting and

fruitful communications with their children. All interactions will be structured in a family literacy curriculum that models effective co-reading.

A remarkable group of public and private partners is committed to our program, adding to both its complexity and its value. The U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Prisons has encouraged this project from the start with an expectation to expand it throughout the bureau’s 115 federal facilities – pending, of course, positive results from the pilot.

Reading is Fundamental (RIF) provides books for the children, parents and mentors. Faculty and students at Columbia Teachers College and Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich have developed literacy curriculum and mentor training materials. E-mentors are being recruited among active and retired employees of such major Connecticut employers as Northeast Utilities, IBM, Pitney Bowes, GE and Xerox. Volunteer mentors to work with the adults are being recruited from the Fairfield County community by Family Services Woodfield. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Wireless Generation will evaluate the pilot’s results. Pending a positive evaluation of the pilot, the Connecticut Dept. of Correction will also extend CLICC to two of its prisons, a men’s facility and a women’s facility.

A landmark \$100,000 gift from Dr. John Rowe’s family foundation affirmed confidence in this CLICC team and greatly advanced plans for the recruitment, screening, training and coordination needed to test the pilot. With this key milestone in sight, we also salute CLICC’s steadfast supporters: the R. D. Donchian Foundation, the William C. Graustein Memorial Fund, Pitney Bowes Literacy and Education Fund, Toys ‘R’ Us, Xerox Corp., the R.R. Donnelly Foundation, Wellspring Trust, Cynthia Roman and Arthur White.

Save the Date
Wednesday Evening, November 19th
4th Annual CT Appleseed Hartford Event

Featured Speaker and Honoree: Neal S. Wolin

*President and Chief Operating Officer for Property and Casualty Operations
Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc.*

Call Bob Kettle, Executive Director, at 203 210-5356 with questions.



Board Member Profile: Dr. Michael Perl

If you asked within Connecticut's dental community who might be its greatest unsung hero, Dr. Michael Perl's name would immediately come up. This soft-spoken, modest, but doggedly persistent and life-long champion for the underserved was a key player in collaborative multi-year advocacy that won inclusion of \$20 million in last year's state budget to motivate dentists to serve Medicaid children. When Mike told the General Assembly's Public Health Committee in 2007 that 70% of Medicaid children in Connecticut were not receiving any dental care at all because the state's low Medicaid reimbursement rates discouraged participation, committee members listened.

Inspiring a Pro Bono Culture Among Dentists

A West Hartford periodontist, Mike had previously recruited 20 volunteer dentists at the Connecticut Health Services clinic in Hartford, where his colleagues have been treating roughly 200 children per year from 2005 to the present. Encouraged by that success, Mike prompted the Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA) to launch a volunteer initiative and to create a Dental Access Committee, which he then agreed to Chair.

Driving Systemic Change in the Dental Profession

Behind the scenes in 2005 and 2006, Mike successfully challenged both the CSDA and the CT Society of Pediatric Dentists (CSPD) to mobilize their members and assume more leadership on the Medicaid issue. Mike first step was to gain the CSPD's written commitment to recruit pediatric dentists for the Medicaid program and to serve these children if the reimbursement rate were raised. Eventually, he secured pledges from roughly 380 Connecticut dentists that they would serve more Medicaid children if the reimbursements were adequately raised. The General Assembly's Appropriations Committee was impressed enough to allocate \$20 million for this purpose during the 2007 budget process.

Pushing Dental Volunteerism Still Further

Mike then traveled to Virginia to research a "Mission of Mercy" project that was providing free dental care for one weekend for the state's underinsured/uninsured - or those who would otherwise do without care. Inspired not only to bring the concept home to Connecticut, Mike morphed into a "fund-raiser extraordinaire", raising more than \$200,000 from Doral Dental, Webster Bank, Rockville Bank, Connecticut Health

Foundation, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Hartford Hospital, CT State Dental Association, CT Dental Foundation and the Bank of New York Mellon.

The result: the Connecticut Mission of Mercy ("CTMOM") was a free weekend-long dental clinic last April whose purpose was to serve individuals living on small incomes or without dental insurance who cannot afford dental care. CTMOM's immensely successful weekend employed 190 volunteer dentists and more than 200 additional professional and civilian volunteers to provide greatly-needed dental care to more than 1,000 state residents.

Mike didn't limit his enthusiasm simply to begin planning a follow-up CTMOM in the New Haven area in April, 2009 for which he is already raising funds. He next imagined more frequent free "mini-MOM" single-day or weekend clinics at several of the state's public dental clinics, a pilot for which is now slated at Connecticut Health Services in Hartford. Knowing Mike, this pilot will be just the beginning. Twelve years ago he began recruiting local dentists and University of Connecticut Dental School students to screen and provide free treatment for the needy children attending Camp Courant. Today, Mike's project is still going strong.

Senior Citizens Law Day II

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Directing Volunteered Legal Help Toward Seniors

Low and moderate-income seniors often lack affordable access to reliable and objective information regarding legal options, choices available to them, and choices they need to at least consider making. Barraged by slanted information and high-pressure sales pitches regarding estate planning tools, "will kits" and a myriad of investment and insurance products, seniors face complex and confusing legal and

financial issues. Enabled by small grants from the NewAlliance Foundation, Washington Mutual Foundation, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Connecticut Community Foundation and the Fairfield County Community Foundation, more than 30 workshops have been held over the past 2 years at senior centers throughout Hartford, New Haven, Fairfield, and Litchfield counties.

Continuing our Series of Workshops: Beginning Round II

Targeting seniors who do not have the resources to hire their own attorneys and financial planners, our workshops use an informal format that encourages questions and dialogue with the lawyers. In offering seniors free, high-quality legal assistance on a broad family of elder law topics that are vitally important to them, we do everything possible to tailor the workshop topics to requests from directors at the individual senior centers.



A PART OF THE APPLESEED NETWORK

Appleseed, a non-partisan and non-profit organization, is a network of public interest law Centers working to identify and address injustices in their communities. Appleseed works to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy expertise, addressing root causes and producing practical solutions. As one of the nation's largest legal pro bono networks, Appleseed Centers work both independently and collectively, bringing their own experiences to create local solutions that are nationally relevant. We connect the top private practice lawyers, corporate counsel, law schools, civic leaders, and other professionals to tackle problems locally, at their root cause.

The Honorable Jon Newman Presents Good Apple Award to U.S. Senator Chris Dodd on May 19, 2008



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In addition to distilling complex information on education law into easy-to-understand guides for parents, we are partnering with existing parent leadership/support groups and school districts to provide outreach and answer parent questions on the booklets' 5 topics through "Ask a Lawyer Forums". Our forums, the first of which will take place in Stamford on October 15, will feature volunteer attorneys and leverage our relationships with organizations such as Connecticut Parent Power, Connecticut PTA, Danbury Children First, Norwalk SEEKS and the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center whose objectives parallel our own.

Organizations wishing to learn about and/or replicate this project will shortly be able to find our legal booklets and other project information at www.ctappleseed.org.