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As our work continues, so does the need for contributions, to ensure that we can continue to support the programs that help our clients and the larger community. Grants will never replace you, our supporters. Grants do not cover most of the "hidden" costs involved - postage, office supplies, rent and even salaries of our regular staff. It is your caring and your passion for the work that we do that allow us to have such a huge impact on the lives of people and their families.

So, please continue to give when you can, and whatever you can. If you like, feel free to designate your gift to a specific area: postage costs about $6,700 annually, printing/copying $7,300, supplies $3,700, phones $4,200, and occupancy $26,000. We try to cut costs as much as possible without sacrificing our commitment to our clients, and we hope to see many of you at our annual luncheon and other events.

Please think about planned giving, which would allow us to budget better, knowing that we can rely on some regular income from donations. We now accept PayPal donations, right from your computer, but still gratefully acknowledge checks made out to Judicial Process Commission and sent to our office! Thank you for all your support, and please forward Justicia to a friend who might be interested.

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The Women's Project is Right on Track!
By Mary Boite

As we move into 2010, we are working hard in collaboration with RIT, on the first phase of the exciting new opportunity provided by the receipt of the federal Second Chance Act grant from the Bureau of Justice. We believe that working with incarcerated women who are pregnant or have small children will reduce recidivism.

We are very pleased to announce that we have recently completed part of the process that will allow us to do that. We recently trained 13 new women as volunteer mentors, who have committed to work with the Women's Project. Victims' advocates from the Monroe County Sheriff's Department donated their time to provide a training event on Victims' Trauma and Recovery, for the new mentors. JPC staff has also started to interview women in the Monroe County Correctional Facility, to begin the selection process.

New staff members are being trained in the use of the SAQ, a risk assessment tool that we will be using in the project. We are grateful that they launched the Project even before the funds have arrived.

JPC Receives Grant from the Federal Second Chance Act!

JUSTICE and INNOCENCE

Schools Need to Address Anti-Bullying Policies
By Joel Freedman

The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) recently filed a federal lawsuit against the MohawkCentralSchool District for failing to protect Jacob, a HerkimerCounty youngster, from vicious bullying by other students.

While Jacob, who is gay and who speaks in a high-pitched voice, was constantly being assaulted, harassed and threatened by bullies, teachers refused to intervene. At least one teacher contributed to this climate of violence by telling Jacob he should be ashamed of himself for being gay.

Less than two weeks after the lawsuit was filed, the district agreed to provide emergency relief to protect Jacob, such as providing him an adult chaperone throughout the school day.

"We are pleased the school district finally recognized that it must act to protect Jacob's safety, but this agreement was just a first step," NYCLU Executive Director Donna Lieberman said. "We will pursue our lawsuit until the MohawkCentralSchool District makes the long-term solutions necessary to ensure that all students are safe at school and treated with the dignity and respect they deserve." The lawsuit contends that protection from harm in public schools is
a basic right protected by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Prior to the lawsuit, during Jacob’s 7th, 8th and 9th grade years, district officials - including the school principal and superintendent of schools - failed to properly investigate information they had about the bullying, or to discipline the bullies, or the teachers who were negligent in their obligations to protect Jacob.

I hope the lawsuit will result not only in Herkimer County schools achieving safe schools for all its students, but will become a catalyst for providing meaningful and effective anti-bullying policies in every school in New York and throughout the United States.

An 11-year-old Massachusetts boy recently hanged himself in response to constant torment at school. Bullying is being blamed for two recent suicides linked to Schenectady High School. Other tragic consequences of bullying include increased mental health problems, substance abuse among victims, and occasional retaliatory violence such as that in April 1999 at Columbine High School in Colorado.

International research confirms large numbers of imprisoned adults were bullies as youngsters. Fortunately, many bullies also mature and become good citizens. My niece, Karen, bullied another girl in high school. Ten years later, Karen accepted an invitation to appear on “The Jenny Jones Show,” where she was confronted on national TV by the woman, who remained hurt by Karen’s previous behavior. Karen had become remorseful even before the program, but she nevertheless good-naturedly accepted the audience’s jeers. I show the program in sociology classes I teach at Finger Lakes Community College, and it usually prompts students to discuss their own high school experiences as bullies or bullying victims, and to discuss causes and remedies for bullying.

Bullying is uncommon on college campuses. Most colleges have zero-tolerance policies against bullying.

In New York, A 3661-B, similar to measures already enacted in several states, would prohibit at-school harassment based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.

Sadly, this bill has repeatedly stalled in the state Senate (S1987-A).

School districts would be required to develop bully-free schools, and guidelines for training educators to respond to bullying. The state’s Commissioner of Education would be required to assist school districts in this regard. Incidents of bullying would have to be reported to the state Education Department.

While efforts should be made to counsel and rehabilitate bullies, many of whom are themselves victims of dysfunctional family situations, violence or substance abuse, the most serious or repeated offenses should be regarded as juvenile delinquency and reported to law enforcement agencies.

Whether the state mandates it by law or not, area school districts should establish zero-tolerance anti-bullying policies. Local human welfare agencies, family courts, law enforcement youth officers, district attorneys and other local officials should be included in establishing such policies.

On a larger scale, coming to grips with the problem of violence in our society has become a major challenge. Schools are a good place to impress upon young people the
need to treat others with respect, and to help establish a culture of non-violence and compassion for all.

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