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Connection, Access, Unity, and Hope

Council for Children's Rights [info@cfcrights.org]

Sent: Thursday, April 09, 2020 4:17 PM

To: Steve Johnston



Council for Children's Rights

news & Letters

SPRING 2020

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We want to hear your voice! Fill out our quick survey.

Letter from the Executive Director

Hello Steve Johnston,

In this time of uncertainty, we need connection more than ever.

CONNECTION has been the foundation of our work at Council for Children's Rights, and we remain committed to this foundation. In the past weeks, we have been continuing to advocate for the legal and human rights of our child-clients. We have not lost our connection with them; in fact, it has grown stronger. The conversations have become deeper — beyond the scope of legal issues — as we offer continued counsel on the essential resources and services they desperately need to stay connected and supported.

We have been increasing our advocacy to ensure our child-clients have access. ACCESS is the beginning point to ensure the protection and support of their legal rights. When a child lacks access...

- to their education,
- to appropriate and necessary mental health treatment,

- to their families while detained in a different county that's miles away,
- to the parent that has only visitation rights but not custody,

...they are incredibly vulnerable. Their lives, health, and well-being are at risk.



Heather Johnson (center) with Caroline Wienecke (left) from Restore Global and her proud father Rick Johnson (right) at this year's A Night for Children's Rights

Access has taken on a heightened meaning today and increased the work we must do. We find ourselves creating resource lists for child-clients to obtain: free WIFI to access their education; a bag of food when the store shelves are empty, and the paychecks have stopped; access to FaceTime because they no longer get to physically hug their parent; or a therapist that can offer teletherapy so a child maintains access to critical mental health treatment. This list goes on. Access is the key to protecting a child's right to being safe, healthy, and well-educated. It is our mission every day. It does not stop when the going gets tough.

We've strengthened our commitment to community partners. Without **UNITY** among all child-serving agencies, the gaps that existed before COVID-19 will become more expansive and more detrimental. A *community* issue like COVID-19 demands a *community* response; we must dedicate ourselves to unifying our resources and partnerships. The Council is deepening existing relationships and also creating new partnerships to fill the gaps emerging during this pandemic.

Connection, access, and unity combined lead to the most important goal we have at the Council, and that is to instill **HOPE**.

hope verb \ˈhop\

: to expect with confidence

"Hope." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster.

"Hope." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster.

The definition of hope from Merriam-Webster is "to expect with confidence." Our goal is to instill hope every day in our child-clients — the confident expectation that they *will* overcome the obstacles they face. To remind each child of their worth, their value, their strength, and their courage to meet the day's challenges.

Today is no different.

We continue to strive to instill hope and ensure our child-clients can *expect with confidence* that we are working even harder now to navigate these uncharted waters.

Issues have become more complex during this pandemic with greater barriers for families and with new legislation being drafted and implemented. We have been and will continue to be at the forefront of how these barriers and new laws impact our individual child-clients as well as the greater systems. And in return, how those systems then impact the individual. It's a complex integration of practice, policy, and real lives.



To *expect with confidence* also means trust. We remain committed to building trust with our child-clients and with our community. We began as a small group of committed individuals — over four decades ago — with hope, with connection, and unified by a mission to ensure the safety, health, and education of Mecklenburg County's youth.

We were a small group, and we created a path for children caught in crisis to see a way out. This, too, is a crisis we are navigating, and we will find a way out.

As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Our community has confirmed year after year after year that it needs Council for Children's Rights, and — frankly — we need you. Our world is changing, and we will steer our path toward a meaningful, positive, and equitable new world, even in the face of the unknown. We take comfort in the connection, access, unity, and hope that fuels us to fight each day for our children to remain living and thriving in a world where their voice matters and is raised for all to hear.

Thank you for your commitment to children.

Sincerely,

Heather Johnson

Heather Johnson, JD, MSW

How COVID-19 impacts the children served by the Council (and what we're doing about it)

The staff of the Council — [along with advocates like you](#) — are continuing to address the needs of children throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg during the COVID-19 crisis. They need us all, now more than ever.



PRACTICE AREA Custody

Family law is an arena that involves heightened emotions, even during stable times. In this time of instability, the reassurances and guidance our advocates provide families is invaluable.

Read about how Director Patti Tutone and the Custody Advocacy Team are supporting their child-clients during this crisis.

Custody Director Patti Tutone's Blog



PRACTICE AREA Defense

As a society, we have a shared responsibility to take care of our children, especially during such a dangerous global pandemic. If we are to have any chance at protecting incarcerated children, facility staff, and the larger community, the time to act is now.

Read about how Director Michell Duprey and the Children's Defense Team are pivoting during this crisis.

Defense Director Michelle Duprey's Blog



PRACTICE AREA Special Education

The widespread school closures across the United States have caused unprecedented disruptions in the K-12 public education system, and like many other states throughout the country, North Carolina public schools are grappling with this reality.

Director Caitlin Whalan Jones and the



PRACTICE AREA Research & Policy

At no time in our agency's history has our philosophy that children's rights are human rights been more true or more in jeopardy; and without a State budget, the health and safety of our communities is a an elusive target.

Read about how Policy Advocate Jaimelee Behrendt-Mihalski is tracking

Individual Advocacy Team (IAT) have collected invaluable resources and links.

IAT Director Caitlin Whalan Jones' Blog

the impact of COVID-19 on policies related to children.

Policy Advocate Jaimelee Behrendt-Mihalski's Blog

This work does not — CAN NOT — happen without you. We rely on [your generosity and support](#) during this crisis. Thank you for being a part of our devoted team of advocates.

Fostering kinship together ... while apart



Who are we if we are not connected to others?

Council for Children's Rights wants to celebrate the connections that make us stronger as a community by lifting up and magnifying the groups that bring us together. If the last couple months have taught us anything it is we need each other more than ever. Our humanity connects us in a way that is unbreakable.

Shortly we will be launching a new campaign to rally our community around the activities, beliefs, hobbies, and other things that bring meaning to our lives. We look forward to a deeper connection to you and your special communities.



We are looking for a few eager souls to be our first "KinMakers" for this Spring campaign. If you'd like help us with the launch, please click the link below and fill out the form with your details.

YES! I'd like to learn more about becoming a KinMaker for the Council!

Now it's your turn!





We want to hear from you — our amazing supporter! Please consider taking a minute or two to complete the survey below. We so appreciate your time and want to deliver content to you that is informative, enriching, and inspiring. Thank you for your support of the children of our community.

Take the Survey!

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