

## CFCR's Mission Moments Newsletter



**From** Caitlin Forrest <advancement@cfcrights.org>  
**To** <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>  
**Reply-To** <advancement@cfcrights.org>  
**Date** 2022-11-22 07:15



As the holidays approach and family is top of mind, we wanted to highlight our Custody Advocacy Team that works hard to improve children's home lives during incredibly stressful times. Our team provides a unique service to Charlotte's children by representing their best interests in parents' high-conflict custody battles— **we give them a voice when it feels like everyone is fighting instead of listening**. We hope you will share this newsletter with your family and friends to help spread the word about our work.

Read through to the end for a special invitation!  
Thank you for your support.

## Keeping Holidays Bright

The holiday season is often a time filled with joy, warmth, and gratitude. It's a time when families and friends can come together after a long year to catch up and celebrate. But, even for the most well-prepared of us, this time of year can be a bit hectic. Family burnt into town, delayed travel plans, crowded shopping centers, the occasional burnt turkey (speaking from experience)— I think we can all agree it can get stressful.



**For our kids whose parents are going through high-conflict custody battles, there are even more stressors and sources of turmoil during this time of year.** The Council for Children's Rights [Custody Advocacy Program \(CAP\)](#) accepts court appointments in these cases to represent the best interests of the child or children caught in the middle. Our team tries to reduce stress and conflict and increase stability and safety in kids' lives all year long— and our efforts can be particularly impactful during the holiday season.

We wanted to give you a glimpse\* into how our Custody Advocacy Team keeps holidays bright for the children we serve:

### Without Council Involved

I'm wondering why Mom, Grammy, and Uncle Pete keep calling Dad bad names and saying mean things about him at the Thanksgiving table, and I'm wishing everyone would just be happy and get along. Maybe it's my fault?

### With Council Involved

I'm thankful that I get two Thanksgiving dinners —one at Mom's with her famous mashed potatoes and one at Dad's where we eat pumpkin pie— and that nobody is making me choose between them. I love both my parents so much.

It's Christmas and I'm wishing I could play with my new toys that I opened this morning at Dad's, but instead I have to switch houses this afternoon and Dad won't let me take my new toys to Mom's because he says he'll "never get them back."

I'm so excited that my sister and I get TWO Christmas mornings. We're doing Christmas morning at Dad's on the 25th and then playing with our new toys all day. Then, we get another Christmas morning at Mom's on the 27th. Mom and Dad told us that Christmas is about the love and time together, and it doesn't matter what day you celebrate.

I'm feeling jealous that my cousins get to go on the December trip to Nana's and Pop-Pop's house in Florida every year, but I have to miss it every other year because Mom says it's just not fair to her and she wants me home with her.

I'm looking forward to my yearly trip to Nana's and Pop Pop's house! Mom says I'm going to have such a great time and that I need to take lots of pictures to show her how much fun I had.

I'm nervous about New Year's Eve. Last year, Dad got really drunk and had some other guys over who made me feel really uncomfortable. I wish I didn't have to be there.

I'm so glad my lawyer convinced Dad to get help for his drinking, and I'm really looking forward to our New Year's Eve plan of eating pizza and watching the ball drop together!

*\*These are examples and do not represent any specific individual.*

I think we all hope that the holiday season will be filled with as much magic and delight as possible for Charlotte's children. **Our dedicated CAP team works hard to support resolution in our children's parents' cases so that they are not staying in unsafe or unsuitable environments, are not bearing the emotional burden of their parents' legal battle, and can fully experience the joy of the season.**

For families without access to private legal representation, **we are the only representation available for Charlotte's children in these cases.** CAP cases often involve serious allegations such as sexual or physical abuse, substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health issues. They are often the most difficult cases to resolve and can take many months, or even years. While we're court-appointed, the demand for our services far exceeds our team's availability. We need additional investment in this high-performing team to meet the needs of our community. **Please consider a donation today to help us restore safety and stability in more children's lives:**

## Donate Today

Please contact our Advancement Director Amy Vavra at [amyv@cfcrights.org](mailto:amyv@cfcrights.org) for more information on ways to donate and to get involved.

# Council Changemakers

This month we want to spotlight our dedicated CAP Director, Patti Tutone

PATTI  
TUTONE

Director,  
Custody Advocacy Program



**What led you to Council and how long have you been here?**

I've been at Council for about 6 and a half years now, and I previously was with Legal Aid of North Carolina for 9 years. I went to law school with the intention of pursuing a public service legal career, and public service is truly my passion. I strongly believe that if you think to yourself "someone should be doing something about that" and if you have the skillset and education to be that someone, you should be that someone.

**Tell us about your role here**

I started at Council as a Staff Attorney with the Custody Advocacy Program (CAP), and I am now the Director of CAP. I love that my current position allows me a mix of continuing to represent and advocate for individual children, while also guiding and leading the other members of CAP and overseeing all program operations.

**What do you enjoy most about working at Council?**

The best thing about working at Council is that I feel like I get to truly make a difference in children's lives by working directly with the whole family. In a lot of my cases, there has been a lack of access to justice for the families, and I like getting in there, figuring out what needs to get done, and getting those things done.

**What inspires you about Council?**

My co-workers inspire me every day. It's truly a privilege to work alongside people with different areas of expertise but who all share a passion and commitment to fighting inequities and making children's lives better.

**Where are you from or where did you grow up?**

I was born in Staten Island, New York and lived in New Jersey as a child, but I've been in Charlotte since 1992, so I'm basically a native at this point!

**Outside of work, how do you like to spend your time?**

Outside of work, I love going to trivia, doing escape rooms, traveling, trying out new restaurants with friends, spending time with my family, and seeing live music. I am a bit of a social butterfly, but I also enjoy my alone time on the couch binge-watching Netflix shows.

## Family Law: How it Works

The Council for Children's rights **Custody Advocacy Program** accepts court appointments in the highest-conflict Mecklenburg County child custody cases, to represent the best interests of the child or children caught in the middle of those cases.



Our program utilizes a **structured team approach to investigate each case**. Each team consists of a staff attorney, a volunteer attorney, and a volunteer custody advocate. You can learn more about our [volunteer opportunities here](#).

- **Appointment:** We are **appointed by Mecklenburg County Family Court Judges** to advocate for the best interests of children in custody cases in which the conflict between their parents threatens to impede the judge's inquiry into and determination of the children's best interests.
- **Investigation:** We **investigate all the circumstances and facts of the case** by interviewing clients and collateral witnesses, conducting home visits, and gathering a variety of records and documents, which enables us to take a position regarding what is in the children's best interest.
- **Children First:** When we are court appointed to a case, we never represent adults or parents involved. **We only represent the best interests of the child** or children involved.

In cases where neither parent has representation, part of our service to the children and to the Court is in helping both parents navigate the complexities of the court system, while ensuring the judge hears all relevant evidence.

While we don't represent the parents, getting their case through the court process smoothly and efficiently is most certainly in the best interest of the children we represent. **Children need resolution in their parents' cases so that they are not staying in unsafe or unsuitable environments, changing schools mid-year, or in limbo about where they're going to be living.**

And anything that leads to litigation coming to an end and the parties being able to shift their focus away from fighting that battle and towards caring for their children, is always best for our child-clients.

## How You Can Help

**Join our CAP Team:** We're hiring a part-time staff attorney on our Custody Advocacy Team. The staff attorney will work closely with a volunteer attorney and volunteer custody advocate on each case to complete an investigation and subsequently resolve the custody dispute through settlement, or represent the children's best interests in a custody trial. Case load will be commensurate with part-time hours— not to exceed 25 hours per week. [Learn more and apply today on our website.](#)

**Volunteer:** We have [multiple opportunities to volunteer](#), most notably with our Custody Advocacy Program (CAP). While our November 30th in-person CAP volunteer training is full, we do have virtual training available. Email [volunteer@cfcrights.org](mailto:volunteer@cfcrights.org) for more information.

We are also looking for community members and philanthropists to help accelerate our fundraising efforts. If you're interested in learning how you can get involved, email [advancement@cfcrights.org](mailto:advancement@cfcrights.org).

**Give:** You can [donate online](#) or by sending a check to: ATTN: Council for Children's Rights, 601 East 5th Street, Suite 510, Charlotte, NC 28202. Email [advancement@cfcrights.org](mailto:advancement@cfcrights.org) with any questions and to learn more.

**Give to the Council**

**You're Invited**

**Cheers for a Cause Happy Hour**

Friday, December 2nd

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

@ Divine Barrel Brewing in NoDa

Come join us for a casual evening to support the Council for Children's Rights and learn more about our work! Whether you're a long-time supporter, volunteer, or just want to support Charlotte's kids— we want to see you there. Divine Barrel is also generously donating a portion of the event's proceeds to Council so come cheers for a cause with us!

**RSVP**



Council for Children's Rights | 601 East 5th Street, Suite 510, Charlotte, NC 28202  
www.cfcrights.org

[Unsubscribe\\_sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org](mailto:unsubscribe_sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [advancement@cfcrights.org](mailto:advancement@cfcrights.org) in collaboration with

