

## Children First: A Message from the Executive Director



**From** Heather Johnson <heather@cfcrights.org>  
**To** <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>  
**Reply-To** <heather@cfcrights.org>  
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# Council for Children's Rights

**Dear Steve Johnston,**

I'll never forget the day I received my official offer to join Council for Children's Rights. It was September 2, 2011 at lunchtime and I was standing on the corner of Trade and Tryon when my phone rang. I let out a happy scream and accepted immediately. A passerby said "This must be a really good day," and it was. It has been 14 years of really good, amazing days, having the life-changing opportunity to be part of Council. I want to share my deep gratitude for an experience that has shaped me in ways I'll carry for the rest of my life.

**Children First** has not only been the guiding value of Council, but also a deeply personal one for me. I am honored to have played a small part in the lives of thousands of children. From them, I've learned to choose hope over fear, to forgive even when it's hard, and to lead with love—even in the midst of pain. Our children's strength and courage have changed me forever.

Every day spent here has been a gift. It has been an incredible privilege to work alongside some of the most compassionate, skilled, and inspiring individuals—people who have felt more like family than colleagues. I've learned so much from my coworkers—not just about the law and the systems we navigate, but about humanity, resilience, and what it means to truly show up for others with authenticity and heart. We shared a powerful commitment to always put children first, bringing purpose and compassion to everything we accomplished. I've been surrounded by support, driven by purpose, and inspired by the lives we've touched.

After a meaningful and rewarding tenure where I had the opportunity to strengthen programs, grow partnerships and advance our mission, I have completed the strategic goals I set out to accomplish. I, too, am preparing for my next chapter in life and look forward to applying my experience and skills in the service of children. I look forward to working with interim, Karen Parker, as Council prepares for its next chapter and continuing to set our children up for success through my last day on June 13th.

Thank you for your support, the memories, and your unwavering commitment to this important work. I will carry this experience with me always.

With deep gratitude,

**Heather Johnson**  
Executive Director  
Council for Children's Rights



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