

Appleseed This Week

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A nonprofit network of 16 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico, Appleseed is dedicated to building a society in which opportunities are genuine, access to justice is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest.

SAVE THE DATE!

On Thursday, March 25, 2010, Appleseed and Chicago Appleseed will proudly host our annual joint fundraising event, *Organizing for Change in Chicago*, at the Art Institute of Chicago.

At the event, we will honor an outstanding

Keeping Kids in Class

Responding to disproportionate levels of disciplinary incidents involving low-income and minority students across the state, Connecticut Appleseed is working to formulate a list of best practices for addressing the disciplinary challenges faced by school districts.

Inspired by Texas Appleseed's groundbreaking 2007 research, the Connecticut Center's *Keep Kids in School* project is now making major strides, as interviews with administrators, principals, and teachers in nine school districts statewide are nearing completion. These interviews will help shape a report that combines practical, on-the-ground perspectives from educators, policy research at both state and district levels, and district-specific disciplinary data from the Connecticut Department of Education.

Unsurprisingly, this data reveals that black and Hispanic students encounter disciplinary incidents at disproportionate rates, a pattern exacerbated among males. Within Connecticut Appleseed's 20-district data sample, the Center also found that the more impoverished the school district, the more acute the overrepresentation of black and Hispanic students being disciplined.

Accordingly, the project's aim is to help schools address disciplinary issues in fairer, more effective ways. For example, according to interviews, one high school has formed a Young Men's Council and found it to be a successful way to reach previously suspended students. The Council's leaders connect well with minority male students and attempt to mentor and guide them, helping those who have been suspended to vent, get over the incident, and re-integrate constructively.

Similarly, several high school principals have noted that juvenile review boards (JRBs) are a helpful and desirable means of

individual, law firm, and corporate leader for their commitment to pro bono.

Roger Pascal
Schiff Hardin LLP

Kirkland & Ellis LLP

William Von Hoene
Exelon Corporation

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intervention. JRBs target first-time offenders under 15 years old whose offenses are no more serious than misdemeanors. Police refer these young offenders to the JRB, where community volunteers hear the "case" as a panel and offer a balanced and restorative justice solution where the victim is compensated and/or healed. Offenders are typically provided with counseling.

The Hartford office of Bingham McCutchen LLP has emerged as the project's lead pro bono partner under the guidance of CT Appleseed board member and Bingham McCutchen partner Michael D'Agostino. As Chair of the Hamden (CT) Board of Education, D'Agostino is well-positioned to ensure a broader audience for the report's findings by reaching out to his peers and encouraging changes in disciplinary practices at the district level.

Having already released an executive summary to influence the Connecticut General Assembly's short legislative session, the Center will complete and release the final report in advance of the legislature's 2011 budget session. For more information, contact Connecticut Appleseed Executive Director Bob Kettle at bobkettle@ctappleseed.org. Other Appleseed Centers working on juvenile justice and student disciplinary issues include Texas, Georgia, and Massachusetts.