

"A HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW IT WILL NOT MATTER WHAT MY BANK ACCOUNT WAS, THE SORT OF HOUSE I LIVED IN, OR THE KIND OF CAR I DROVE . . . BUT THE WORLD MAY BE DIFFERENT BECAUSE I WAS IMPORTANT IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD." *AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Dear Young Lawyer,

One Child can be impacted tremendously by **One Lawyer**.

Each day in the United States, there are hundreds of thousands of children in foster care. Most of these children have been ripped from their homes after having been victims of abuse or neglect by their parents. After being removed from the people they love unconditionally, the children are most commonly placed by people they have never before met, to live in shelters or with families they have never before known, to sleep in places they have never before seen, and forced to part of a life completely foreign to them. These children can linger in the system for years and move from placement to placement during that time. Many times these children have no one to advocate for their needs, no hope for having a permanent home, and no source to approach for legal assistance on issues important to them. As lawyers, we have a very unique ability to provide a voice for each of these children.

As lawyers, we possess a special ability to help these children who, through no fault of their own, have become wards of the State. We can provide them with a voice, with permanency, and with guidance. The 2003-04 public service project is focused on motivating and encouraging each and every young lawyer to commit to helping **One Child** with those needs. Using your commitment to public service as our base and this project as our tool, we can make a difference.

"**One Child, One Lawyer**" is a child advocacy based initiative to provide lawyers with skills and contacts to actually make a difference in the life of a child. The initiative is multifaceted. To give children who have been removed from their home a voice in the system that determines their fate, we will provide training programs for lawyers to serve as guardians ad litem. To give children who have no real hope for reunification with their birth family, we have training to enable young lawyers to serve as pro bono counsel for families wanting to adopt these children or create guardianships to formalize and finalize the commitment to that child. And for those children who need guidance on issues impacting their ability to learn, we have a program to create school-based legal clinics. These clinics can help students in middle and high school with issues from dating violence and immigration issues to parental rights and homelessness.

One Child, One Lawyer has motivated, educated and instigated young lawyers to become involved in the life of just **One Child**. Whether **One Child** is given a voice, provided with a permanency or given a source to address legal issues, **One Lawyer** can have an enormous impact on the life of a child. With your help, we could make an even greater difference in the lives of children.

On the enclosed CD-ROM, you will find the materials necessary to get you started, including:

- * “How To” for Adoptions and Guardianships 101
- * Sample Adoption and Guardianship Form
- * Wisconsin’s OCOL Guardianship Project – An Outline Memo on How To
- * “How To” for Guardian ad Litem Training
- * Extensive materials regarding Guardian ad Litem Training
(including materials to train as well as materials for GAL use)
- * How to Start Your Own School Based Legal Clinic Booklet
 - Basics of Getting Started – Who, What, When, Where & How
 - Common Structural Issues, Client Issues ...and Challenges
 - Contact and Detailed Information for Clinics Currently Operating
- * South Carolina’s Kids Law Powerpoint Presentation
- * South Carolina’s Kids Law Booklet
- * National Contact List / State by State Resource Guide
- * Our Special Project Team Member Roster with Contact Information
- * The Nebraska Lawyer Article (August 2004 Issue)
(Outlining implementation of OCOL in several states)

Please take the time to commit to **One Child**. The Young Lawyers Division and its staff are dedicated to this project. We will assist you in getting these programs up and running in your area. All we need from you is a commitment to work with us. These materials are an excellent source and you may not need further assistance. But if you find that you do, please feel free to contact any team member or the YLD staff.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Cole
2003-04 Chair, ABA Young Lawyers Division

Amie Martinez & Victoria Wu
Co-coordinators, YLD Special Project Team

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION

ONE CHILD, ONE LAWYER
2003-2004 Special Project Information Packet

Jonathan Cole, Chair

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