

Community Wishes Are “Grant”ed

In fiscal year 2008-2009 the New Jersey State Bar Foundation continues its longstanding tradition of underwriting worthwhile law-related education programs sponsored by other nonprofit organizations. This year the Foundation will support 26 such programs with funding totaling \$1,100,000. The expansion of the **Boys and Girls Clubs of New Jersey’s** successful **Gang Prevention Outreach** program represents just one judicious allocation of grant funds by the Bar Foundation.

Ganging up on Crime

The overflow crowd at the Law Center’s May 5 gang workshop tells the troubling story: Gangs and gang violence are very much a presence in New Jersey. Police report that as of 2004, approximately 17 percent of homicides in the state were due to gangs. What’s more, gangs are increasing in number: In 1997, 16,700 gangs were reported; by 2006, that figure had jumped to 25,000. Clearly, the number of gang threats has been steadily growing throughout the state.

In an attempt to stem that tide, the **Boys and Girls Clubs of New Jersey** began **Gang Prevention Outreach** efforts in several New Jersey cities last January. With a grant from the Bar Foundation, the initiative is expanding this year to Plainfield and Asbury Park, with more cities in the pipeline. The program, which involves a wide range of gang-diversion programs designed to draw teens away from gangs and towards positive alternatives, has been proven to keep at-risk kids age 6 to 18 from joining gangs, according to a federal study. Gang Prevention Outreach approaches the gang problem from seven distinct aspects:

Street SMART teaches younger children how to resist gang recruitment, resolve conflicts peacefully and respect differences. Participants organize community events that spread the Clubs’ messages.

Career Launch/Job Ready helps school underachievers assess and build their job-readiness skills, employs older youth, and shows teens realistic opportunities for a better future than gangs offer them.

Keystone Clubs emphasize character and leadership development, education and recreation.

Money Matters teaches practical money management skills to encourage financial responsibility.

Passport to Manhood teaches responsibility in Club boys by emphasizing maturation, growth and positive behavior.

SMART Girls helps teen girls stay physically fit, instills positive values, bolsters self-image and offers mentoring.

Club Tech provides self-directed coursework in a variety of digital arts, including Web design, music composition and movie making.

The project has been embraced by New Jersey Attorney General Anne Milgram, who expects at least 500 youths to be dissuaded from joining gangs when the program is fully implemented. “We can’t arrest our way out of the problem,” she said. “We will all be more successful if we can prevent kids from joining gangs” in the first place. Thus far, more than 130 teens have been recruited for the program.

Another ambitious new project is Newark’s **Youth Court**, funded by NJSBF, the Association on Corrections and the Center for Court Innovation. Teenagers are trained to act as *de facto* judges, jurors and advocates in cases involving their peers. The goals of Youth Court are to provide young people with alternatives solutions to engaging in petty crime, instill notions of personal responsibility and restitution to the community, and help other teenagers get on the right path with links to tutoring, mentoring and counseling services as well as leadership training.

Other NJSBF-Supported Programs

Below are brief descriptions of other programs cosponsored by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation:

ARC of New Jersey—The Bar Foundation will underwrite the 2009 conference on **Equal Justice for Victims, Witnesses and Defendants with Developmental Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System**, which focuses on practical information for community health professionals.

Association for Children, NJ—The Foundation is funding a translation of ***A Basic Guide to Special Education*** into Spanish for distribution to families throughout the state.

Community Health Law Project—Through the Foundation's grant, the Community Health Law Project hosts its 2009 **Law and Disability Conference** on legal issues affecting the disabled, elder care and people with AIDS.

George Street Playhouse—This marks the ninth year of Foundation support for the Touring Theatre's **Character Development Initiative** in the form of publishing playbills and teacher guides as well as funding performances of tolerance-based plays in schools. NJSBF, which commissioned the development of the playhouse's **Cyber-Bullying Play**, is giving the piece another financial boost. Using innovative technology, the play helps combat the growing problem of online bullying by engaging its middle school audience with characters and situations young people can identify with and learn from.

Hey, I'm 18—The Foundation funded the original pamphlet as well as its new reprint. Written and compiled by members of the Mercer County Bar, it addresses the legal rights and responsibilities of newly minted adults.

Jewish Family and Vocational Services of Middlesex County—Its **Pathfinders** project provides legal counseling, immigration advocacy and other outreach to low-income seniors, refugees and immigrants in the county.

Hispanic Development Corporation—Its **Citizenship Preparation Classes** offer a variety of services to Newark's Latino community, including English and computer instruction.

Manavi Inc. provides services to South Asian immigrant women on legal rights, family and immigration law with an emphasis on violence prevention and domestic violence support. A new grant from NJSBF funds the translation of Manavi's **Legal Handbook** into Hindi, Urdu and Gujarati.

Mercer County Bar Association—A new grant from the NJSBF funds a reprint and dissemination of the Mercer County Bar Association's informative pamphlet **Hey, I'm 18**, which describe the legal rights and responsibilities of young adults regarding jury service, voting, military services, housing, criminal and family law, housing and more.

Middlesex County Bar Foundation—Project Law is an annual essay contest open to Middlesex County high school students now in its seventh year of as cosponsored by the Middlesex County Bar Foundation and the NJSBF. Topics are coordinated by a team of educators, lawyers and judges as enrichment to classroom activities related to law, social studies, civics and research skills.

New Jersey Hospice and Palliative Care Organization—The NJ State Bar Foundation supports New Jersey's **Healthcare Decisions Day** through underwriting informational brochures, a toolkit and posters. The materials focus on the need to specify and document in advance individuals' healthcare preferences in case of incapacitation.

Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs— NJSBF is just one of a number of partners supporting the organization's **Immigrant Immersion Process**, which seeks to acclimate newly arrived Hispanic adults to the local community through a course covering cultural, organizational, social and legal issues including the Constitution, Bill of Rights, civil rights, landlord-tenant rights, law enforcement and the judiciary.

New Jersey After 3—Kids Court helps introduce youngsters to the workings of the law through class trips to a courthouse and law school, meeting with attorneys and judges, and participating in NJSBF's Law Fair and Law Adventure mock trial training.

New Jersey Network Public Television—As a major funder, the Bar Foundation continues its longstanding support of *Due Process*, a series that explores timely issues of the law with legal experts. NJSBF also funds municipal cable programming on legal topics of interest to the public: **Bergen County Bar Foundation's *Landscape***, **Camden County Bar Foundation's *Legally Speaking***, **Gloucester County Bar Association's *People's Law Forum*** and **Middlesex County Bar Foundation's *Law on the Line***.

Organization of Chinese Americans of New Jersey—A new NJSBF grant supports a **Workplace Bullying Conference** to include workshops on psychological violence, health and productivity, workers' compensation, employee absenteeism and turnover.

Planned Lifetime Assistance Network of New Jersey Inc. (PLAN/NJ)—The Foundation is pleased to support PLAN's initiative, **The Need for Legal and Estate Planning for the Future Care of People with Developmental or Psychiatric Disabilities**, which educates people with disabilities and their families as well as parents of school-age children with disabilities regarding guardianship laws, legal and estate planning, and providing for special needs when caregivers can no longer advocate on their charges' behalf. Seminars, brochures and website updates are among the resources offered.

Rachel Coalition—NJSBF funded its successful **Domestic Violence Handbook**, a comprehensive publication for victims, their advocates and service providers that is jam-packed with useful information about victims' rights and legal options; lists hotline numbers; and contains handy detachable resource cards. Thanks to a new Foundation grant, the pamphlet is being translated into Spanish and revised to include more detailed information on statewide resources.

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey Inc. (SPAN)'s Special Education 2008-2009 Training Series, funded by NJSBF, furnishes training and information to parents of children with disabilities through a basic rights manual, parent advocacy training, and special education workshops on the rights of children involved in DYFS and the Juvenile Justice system.

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice—Through an NJSBF grant, the Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ) funds a program director and volunteer attorney training for the Newark Reentry Legal Services (**ReLeSe**) Network, which addresses the legal barriers that prevent the formerly incarcerated from successfully re-entering the community. ReLeSe (pronounced "release") is a collaboration among VLJ, Newark Mayor Cory Booker's office, the Newark Municipal Court, Seton Hall Law School, the Newark Alliance, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and members of the local bar.

The Foundation also cosponsors VLJ's free monthly **Court-Based Family Law Seminars** for those who cannot afford legal services. At these forums volunteer attorneys familiarize litigants acting on their own behalf with the basics of divorce law and relevant procedures.