



For Immediate Release

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Job Shadow Days Give Los Angeles' Foster Youth a Step Up Toward Independence

Advocacy Organizations Join With LA Chamber of Commerce, Government Offices, and Local Businesses to Inspire and Empower Foster Youth during May Foster Care Awareness Campaign

(LOS ANGELES, CA) – Each year, more than 1,500 young people will age out of Los Angeles' foster care system on their own. Although the average age of financial independence in America is now 26 years old, these youth are expected to attain financial and emotional independence by age 18. Not surprisingly, many youth aging out of foster care are ill prepared for living independently.

In conjunction with the 2007 Los Angeles Foster Care Awareness Campaign, a roundtable of governmental, judicial, and public interest organizations will sponsor Job Shadow Days on May 22-23 to help prepare foster youth for independence. The event is designed to assist foster youth as they identify career interests and to provide them with tools and resources that will contribute to their long-term success.

“Employment opportunities play a critical role in helping former foster youth achieve self-sufficiency,” said Leslie Starr Heimov, Interim Co-Executive Director of the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles. “It is important for the whole community to step up and help foster youth transition into young adulthood as they prepare to enter the job market.”

Youth leaving foster care currently face tremendous challenges. Research shows they are underemployed and earn significantly less than youth in the general population. Fewer than half of transitioning youth had any earnings during a three-year period approaching and immediately following their 18th birthday. Former foster youth who are employed average less than \$6000 annually -- substantially below the poverty level. Once they enter the labor market, youth aging out of foster care progress more slowly than other youth.

“Job Shadow Days will expose youth leaving the foster care system to occupations they may not have considered,” noted Janis Spire, Executive Director of The Alliance for Children's Rights, “and the event will connect them with an array of employment-related resources and training opportunities.”

Businesses and government offices taking part in Job Shadow Days include: Fast Track Expediting; Hilton Los Angeles Airport; Merrill Lynch; Mayer, Brown, Rowe and Maw; Cal National Bank; California State University, Northridge; Children's Hospital of Los Angeles; Preventive Cardiology Center; Office of Assemblywoman Karen Bass; Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; and Office of Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa.

ORGANIZATIONS SPONSORING JOB SHADOW DAYS: The Alliance for Children's Rights, Association of Community Human Service Agencies, California Youth Connection, Casey Family Programs, Center for Applied Research Solutions, Children's Law Center of Los Angeles, Children Uniting Nations, Everychild Foundation, Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services, Hillside, Human Rights Watch, John Burton Foundation, LA Chamber of Commerce, LA Commission for Children and Families, LA County Department of Children and Family Services, LA Community Development Association, LA County Board of Supervisors, LA County Probation Department, Mayer, Brown, Rowe and Maw, and United Friends of the Children.

For more information on Job Shadow Days and the Los Angeles Foster Care Awareness Campaign visit: http://www.clcla.org/init_awareness.htm

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