

I plan to retire this summer, probably in August. By then I will have been at the National Center for Youth Law for 35 years. While I still love my work, I want to leave while I'm healthy so that my wife Jean and I can enjoy ourselves and do the things we don't have time for now.

Looking back, I feel good about what NCYL has accomplished over my 35 years here. We have won landmark victories on behalf of children in foster care and adolescents ensnared in a broken juvenile justice system. We have helped hundreds of thousands of children in need and improved the systems intended to serve them: troubled teens whose problems are exacerbated by confinement in juvenile prisons; abused and neglected children living in a foster care system that does not meet their needs; adolescents who need access to health care; immigrant children in this country alone and without their parents, being mistreated by callous immigration officials; traumatized children denied mental health services that could put them on a path to a healthy and productive life; and many other groups of children whose voices are often not heard. I don't deserve the credit for this work. Credit belongs to the talented, dedicated, and hardworking lawyers and staff who have always been the core of our success and who will continue to do this work long after I leave NCYL.

I also feel good about NCYL's future. We are larger and more effective than ever. Over the last four years our budget has doubled in size, and we have added several new exciting areas of work. Most importantly, we have an experienced and caring staff: some are

seasoned veterans who are recognized as the best child advocates in the country. Others are young, brilliant, and full of energy and ideas – the next generation of child advocates whom we have recruited, trained, and nurtured and who are now ready to create their own vision and embrace future challenges.

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work at the National Center for Youth Law. I went to law school because I wanted to use the law as a tool for social change, to use the law to improve the lives of poor people and people of color. At NCYL, I've been very lucky to have had the opportunity to work towards fulfilling my dream, focusing on children in need.

I am very thankful – to my colleagues over the years and to those with whom I work now. Their dedication, energy, and passion inspire and humble me. I am also very thankful for the wonderful private lawyers who have co-counseled with NCYL over the years. NCYL has had private law firms as co-counsel in all of its major litigation for the last 30 years. We would not have been nearly so successful without those partnerships. I am also grateful to our courageous clients who put themselves on the line to make things better for others.

Finally, I am thankful to those who have given so generously to support our work: my friends and family, law school classmates, law firms and their attorneys, foundations, and many others. We used to be funded primarily by the Legal Services Corporation, until 1996

when, thanks to the Newt Gingrich Congress, we lost all our federal funding, and our very existence was in jeopardy. Despite that challenge, so many stood up to help so generously that we recovered and now we thrive. Without them, our work would not be possible.

The search for my successor is under way. The NCYL Board of Directors, under the continuing leadership of Peter Edelman, plans to make its hiring decision by early June. Professor Edelman and I will assist in the transition, and he looks forward to supporting the new Director. The job description is posted on our website at www.youthlaw.org/about_ncyl/jobs_volunteering/. Please send us well-qualified applicants. I look forward to welcoming next Director of this great organization, and cheering on the worthy efforts of NCYL for many years to come.