

NEWSLETTER

July-December
2009

Welcome to our second newsletter!

JFK's CHARITY KARAOKE MARATHON

On Monday 2nd November 2009, Melissa Reardon, Emma Brett and Rebecca Toennessen took part in a 10 hour non-stop karaoke fundraiser to raise money for JFK's hardship fund. The event was hosted at Lucky Voice Islington. The singers raised £892.50 for the young people who access our hardship fund.



Melissa Reardon and Rebecca Toennessen sing their hearts out for the Hardship Fund.

The hardship fund allocates a maximum of £250 to JFK clients with urgent financial needs who, without our assistance, would have no legitimate means of getting money. The fund has been used for a wide variety of needs from providing driving lessons to buying beds for kids who slept on the floor.



Emma Brett singing like an angel!

We'd like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Melissa, Emma and Rebecca. If anyone would like to do a fundraising event on our behalf please contact joperriam@justforkidslaw.org.

We would also like to give a big thank you to Esme Peach of Refugee Action for organising the event and Martha Lane Fox for donating the venue.

WELCOME!

We would like to introduce Lucy Payton and Katie Razzall as the newest members of the JFK board.

Lucy has joined the board to assist us with strategic planning. Lucy has a background in international development and worked at the World Bank in Washington DC. She also worked as a management consultant at the Boston Consulting Group where she focused on organisational change projects. Lucy is now a Business Manager at Teaching Leaders, an ARK charity which aims to increase educational attainment levels for students in urban schools through training and support to teachers.

Katie Razzall will assist with media and communication, she is one of Channel 4's news presenters.



Katie Razzall presenting the Channel 4 News!

Katie joined ITN in 1998 after time as a press officer in Parliament and was soon an award-winning producer, as a journalist she covers everything from social exclusion to business and foreign affairs

When asked about joining the board of JFK Katie said; "I'm thrilled. This charity already punches far above its weight -and has so much further to go. Its' an honour to be able to play a part in making that happen."

YOUTH ADVOCACY

Recently, our Youth Advocate, Ernestina Amanfo was asked to assist Daniel (13) who had brought a knife

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into school and used it to threaten another student. Daniel was

at risk of permanent exclusion because of this incident. Ernestina spoke to Daniel about the incident and what had led him to bring a knife into school. Daniel informed Ernestina that he had been bullied and beaten up by the student for two years and the student had pulled a knife on him. Daniel felt he had no other choice but to bring the knife into the school to protect himself. He had no intention of using the knife. Daniel's father informed Ernestina that his son had a statement of special educational need and felt that his son was not obtaining the necessary support from the school. Ernestina assisted Daniel at the Governor's Disciplinary Meeting. The Governor's were informed of the history between Daniel and the student, the ongoing bullying and that an emergency/interim review of Daniel's statement of educational needs should be undertaken. The school agreed that this was the appropriate remedy offering mediation and allowing Daniel to remain at school.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Richard, sixteen years old, had spent time in prison before but when he was locked up this year it was at an extremely traumatic time in his life. Richard's girlfriend had just miscarried and he blamed himself and desperately wanted to be there to support her. Richard started self-harming in the cells in Court, tearing at his skin on his arms stomach and face with his own nails, a doctor was called and he was sedated. Due to our concerns we made representations to the Court that Richard was vulnerable and should not be detained in prison, his own Youth Offending Team refused to support our application on the basis that he had been able to cope with prison before. Despite the Youth Offending Team objections the Court agreed with us; Richard was found to be vulnerable and was placed in a small unit with only 20 boys. His Youth Offending Team informed us that they would not allow him to stay there when he turned seventeen and he would be transferred to prison. Luckily the day before his seventeenth birthday we made an application to the Court to dismiss his case due to insufficient evidence, we were successful. Richard was released to go home with his girlfriend and family all of whom were waiting for him outside Court with balloons. Without our specialist knowledge Richard would have spent that time in prison, with no proper care, he would have continued to self-harm and could have suffered long term psychological damage.

TRAININGS

Just for Kids Law and Prison Reform Trust's Out of Trouble program have partnered to provide specialist trainings across the country to lawyers representing

children and young people in criminal proceedings. It has

long been an aim of JfK that children in criminal proceedings are provided with specialist representation. There is currently no requirement for lawyers to have any kind of additional training to represent children and young people, despite the different legislation and body of case law. What is unique about our training is that as well as informing about the law we use our kids as trainers. We have been providing our training for a number of years to various chambers and law schools but now, thanks to Prison Reform Trust, the training will be rolled out nationally. Trainings will take place from March to September next year and will be in; Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Hull, Ipswich, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle and Nottingham. Dates will be advertised on our website in the New Year.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

In September our board member Maya Sikand and director Shauneen Lambe presented a seminar on at Garden Court Chambers Children's Rights Day, in celebration of the Twentieth anniversary of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The seminar covered the rights of children in criminal proceedings to effectively participate in their trials and how to identify and litigate the issues of fitness to plead and effective participation.

Meanwhile co-director Aika Stephenson was spreading the message to young people in Luton when she gave a talk at Starlight Youth Club about our work.