

## INSIDE:



### LIVING HER DESTINY

How Attorney  
Shereen White  
Found Her Way to  
Children's Rights



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Children's Rights!

## IN FOCUS:

# Victory for Kids in Missouri, Wake-Up Call for the Nation



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npr

**Missouri's Foster Kids Can No  
Longer Be Doped Up Thanks To  
A New Legal Settlement**

Life is cruel for so many reasons for too many children in Missouri's child welfare system. Now, a ground-breaking court settlement approved late last year means more than 13,000 children will be safer in the future.

The settlement resolves a case brought in 2017 by Children's Rights, the National Center for Youth Law, Saint Louis University School of Law Legal Clinics, and the law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. Our goal was to stop the misuse of psychotropic drugs administered to children in foster care without clear necessity or oversight. Their stories are heartbreaking: children put on daily doses of multiple drugs that cause confusion, hallucinations, dramatic weight gain, myriad health problems – and do nothing to address the underlying mental health disorders children suffer from because of trauma and abuse.

Children's Rights and our partners identified numerous failures on the part of the state, including not keeping adequate medical histories for the children, or not having a mechanism to review extreme cases, such as when a child is prescribed as

many as seven psychotropic medications at one time.

We knew there was a better way to provide care for these kids. Our agreement sets in motion a process for overhauling the state's practices and protecting children: medical records will be monitored; doctors and caregivers, with real input from youth, will vet the risks and the benefits of medication before it is administered; and an independent child psychiatrist will be available to provide secondary review of prescriptions for efficacy and safety.

As the first federal class-action lawsuit in the country to focus singularly on the dangerous use of psychotropic medications among youth in foster care, the case will not only benefit children in Missouri, it also sets the stage for tackling what is a nationwide problem in the foster care system.

On any given day, there are more than 440,000 children in U.S. foster care. All are victims of trauma—through abuse, neglect, and the experience of removal from their homes. Nearly all enter state custody with

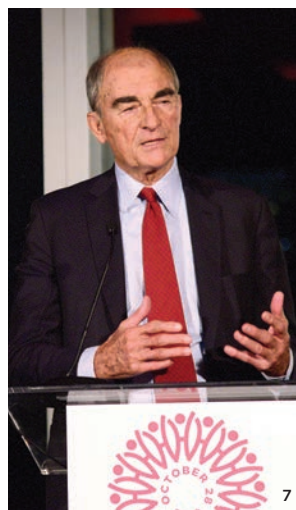
# You Showed Up for Children's Rights

Throughout 2019, friends and family from across the country came out to defend the rights of children. We also had a lot of fun.

## “I Miss My Mommy, But I’m Safe”: A Night to Remember

This year, Children's Rights hosted its 14th annual Inspiration Awards & Benefit Gala at the Mandarin Oriental in New York. It was a knock-out success — and we had some very special guests. We honored Vincent Mai, Founder and Chairman of The Cranemere Group; William McNabb, III, Former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Vanguard; and Lexie Pérez-Grüber, Health & Public Management Service Consultant at Accenture.

We also had a special visit from Karli, a 6 ½ year-old Sesame Street muppet in foster care. She told the crowd, “My mommy has been having a hard time. She can’t take care of me right now even though she loves me very much. So my forever parents keep me safe and give me a place to belong for now.”



**NYC Gala: 1.** Speaker and actor **Rosario Dawson** and special guest **Karli** from Sesame Street **2.** Emcee **Jordan Roth** **3.** Board member **Anne Robinson** **4.** Honoree **William McNabb, III** **5.** Board members and gala co-chairs, **Lewis Tepper** and **Chiara Trento Mai** **6.** Board chair **Megan Shattuck** **7.** Honoree **Vincent Mai** **8.** Honoree **Lexie Pérez-Grüber**



# Races and Duffles and Lemonade, Oh My!

Take a look at some of our favorite moments from the year.



**Children's Champion Ride:** From Manhattan to Staten Island, our hardy Children's Champion Team powered through the raindrops and cycled for kids as part of the TD Five Boro Bike Tour in NYC.



**Rocco** does it again. This youngster's recurring lemonade stand, with all proceeds supporting Children's Rights, was a big hit this year. Join our Kids for Kids lemonade stand campaign in 2020 by emailing Mary Grace Cobbs at [mcobbs@childrensrights.org](mailto:mcobbs@childrensrights.org).



**Glimmers of Hope:** Artist and YPLC member **Ronald Draper** designed this gorgeous limited-edition, 14-karat gold HOPE necklace for the 2019 gala. Contact [development@childrensrights.org](mailto:development@childrensrights.org) for more information.

A.D.



## Wine and Words for Youth:

Our Young Professionals Leadership Council (YPLC) came together to raise funds and raise awareness for our cause. "I was in the foster care system and although I had difficulties for sure — I am one of the lucky ones," YPLC member **Candice Chachkin** shared.



**Everyone Left This Party with a Bigger Heart:** The Delouvrier family opened their home to Children's Rights and our supporters on a beautiful autumn evening full of inspiring stories.



**Holiday Helpers:** Our inaugural bag drive was a huge success! In partnership with iThrive Worldwide, we delivered 50 gift bags to youth who are aging out of foster care.



**Atlanta on the Move:** We gathered our Georgia supporters for a fun, multi-charity fundraising run in Atlanta! (No, this baby boy did not run the 5K because he can't walk yet. Maybe next year!)



# CR INSIDER: TYLER WINSLOW

## WHY I'M A MEMBER

Meet Tyler Winslow — car enthusiast, father of two girls, and monthly donor to Children's Rights! As the owner of a Mercedes auto shop in Cincinnati, he learned about Children's Rights when the organization was featured in a news article in 2015. Here's why he's been a loyal supporter ever since.

### Have you always been interested in children's issues?

The truth? I can't say that children's issues have always been at the top of my radar. But as a father, I started learning about local children's organizations and paying more attention to news stories highlighting the plight of at-risk kids. Since I began supporting Children's Rights, this issue has become very important to me.

### What aspect of the work is most important to you?

There is almost no 'greater good' than assisting a child in need. Vulnerable children can't advocate for themselves, and because of that, their hardships often go unnoticed until it's too late. Additionally, helping children during such formative years means there's a real chance to make positive, lasting change in their lives.

### Why do you think people should join the Children's Rights Monthly Sustainer Program?

First of all, it's easy. I guarantee if you're reading this newsletter that there's a dollar amount you can fit into your monthly budget — whether it's \$5 or \$500. Second, whatever amount you decide to contribute, it will undoubtedly be the best money you spend that month. Finally, helping at-risk kids is one of the most worthwhile causes we can dedicate ourselves to. There's no question that every dollar you contribute is money well spent.

### What would you like to see changed in the child welfare system over the next five years?

That's a tough one. The fact that there are so many abused and neglected kids in our country is a tragedy. How can we



make the biggest impact? In my opinion, real change will be made when we focus on prevention. As a society, we should take a long, hard look at the causes of child maltreatment, and then decide, as a community, that we're going to try to address and prevent those problems. That's what Children's Rights does, and that's why I'm a monthly member.

## Finding Her Way to Children's Rights

### Meet Staff Attorney Shereen White



It was 4:28 AM when Shereen White hit send. She'd seen the Children's Rights job opening weeks earlier. It focused on her life's passion. But commute to New York City from Connecticut with an infant and toddler at home? No way.

Shereen grew up in a family that moved a lot, which taught her lessons about resiliency and adapting to new situations. Along the way, she developed a love of learning and knew her destiny was somehow connected to children and education. She also had a direct connection to the ills of the child welfare system.

"My dad spent many years in the foster care system and aged out. He's an amazing and special human being, and he tells stories that leave us both in tears because that's how awful they are."

This drive to make things better led Shereen to Duke, where she got her undergrad degree, and on to Villanova Law and a job with a private firm, where she was encouraged and helped to follow her heart: first as an advocate attorney for abused and neglected kids, and then

as assistant general counsel for special education for the School District of Philadelphia.

Which brought Shereen to that middle-of-the-night job application. Commute or no commute, she couldn't get Children's Rights off her mind. So when she woke up at midnight, she told herself, "If it's still there, I'm going for it." She heard back the next day.

"I have a strong faith in God and I know the plan for me is to have an impact on the lives of children—not kid by kid, but by changing systems. Being here feels like all of my experiences professionally and personally come together. I was literally being prepared for this job, this mission, this fight. Working at CR feels in every way like I'm fulfilling my destiny."

# John Lewis, Still Fighting the Good Fight

By Christina Wilson Remlin, Lead Counsel, Children's Rights

This year Martin Luther King Day was a special one for me, personally and professionally. On Monday, I cuddled up with my three-year old son Oliver and read portions of *March*, the moving graphic novel trilogy about the civil rights movement written by Representative John Lewis. On Wednesday, I had the honor of meeting the Representative's staff to share Children's Rights' support for a critical bill he has sponsored.

Oliver was riveted by *March* and especially by its portrayal of Dr. King as a towering voice of peace and justice who died so tragically. As an Atlanta native, I grew up listening to the same stories of the movement to change the world that has its roots in my birthplace. Today, my office is just a quick trip to Representative Lewis's headquarters, which is where I found myself last Wednesday.

My colleagues and I were there to applaud and support the Every Child Deserves a Family Act (ECDF). It was introduced in June by Lewis and Republican Representative Jennifer González-Colón of Puerto Rico.

The ECDF Act promotes the best interests of children by prohibiting federally-funded child welfare agencies from discriminating against children, families, and individuals on the basis of religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), and marital status.

Our nation is currently facing a shortage of homes available for young people who need them. Now, a spate of state laws and policies, and a pending federal proposal that would enshrine taxpayer-funded discrimination on religious grounds, threaten to reduce the number of foster homes.

Eleven states have enacted laws that explicitly allow adoption agencies to discriminate against families that are, in their view, not "traditional" — such as LGBTQ, religious minority, and mixed faith families. Only federal legislation can put a stop to these heinous, cruel laws.

That is why Children's Rights supports the ECDF Act — and applauds Representative Lewis. It's also why Children's Rights recently launched our Interfaith Coalition for Children's



From left: Christina Wilson Remlin, Lead Counsel; and Aaron Finch, Senior Staff Attorney meet with Rep. John Lewis Staff

Rights. Partnering with faith organizations around the country, Children's Rights and the Interfaith Coalition oppose legislation and policy changes that would ultimately deprive vulnerable children of safe, loving homes.

In *March*, John Lewis paints a vivid picture of his own life-long struggle for justice — all the way from poverty on a sharecropper's farm to the halls of Congress. Today, even as he does battle against a deadly cancer, Lewis continues to fight the good fight on behalf of vulnerable children who would otherwise have no voice. That's exactly the spirit Children's Rights strives to embody in our work.

Children's Rights is hosting a panel discussion  
with interfaith leaders in NYC!  
Visit [childrensrights.org/interfaith-nyc](https://childrensrights.org/interfaith-nyc)  
to learn more and RSVP.



## PROUD TO BE A PARTNER

### Angela Vigil

Partner and Executive Director • Pro Bono Practice • Baker & McKenzie LLP

“ ”

I've been a children's rights lawyer for over 20 years, but the outrage I feel as a witness to the abuse and neglect of innocent children never goes away. At Baker & McKenzie our focus is on making an impact on children's lives that is measurable and sustainable. Our partnership with Children's Rights has been rich and rewarding. We share the same values — superior legal talent, a passion for collaboration and a commitment to systemic change.

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significant mental health needs, which frequently leads to the prescription of psychotropic medications.

Antipsychotics, one of the most powerful classes of psychotropic drugs, are often administered to children in foster care to treat a diagnosis, such as ADHD, that the drug was never designed to address. These medications can sometimes lead to other profound and even permanent adverse effects including psychosis, seizures, irreversible movement disorders, suicidal thoughts, aggression, weight gain, organ damage, and other life-threatening conditions.

The grave harms and risks to foster children flowing from the administration of psychotropic medications are exacerbated because these children often live with caretakers who do not have detailed knowledge of their trauma background, mental health needs, or medical history. This puts children at a heightened risk of serious physical and psychological harm because of the lack of an adequate oversight system to ensure that psycho-

tropic drugs are administered safely and only when necessary.

The settlement in Missouri will establish better practices there that prioritize the health and well-being of its most vulnerable children. But experts also hope that it marks the dawn of a national wake up call for states across the country.

John Ammann, the McDonnell Professor of Justice in American Society at Saint Louis University School of Law, said he believes the settlement will serve as a “model road map for social service agencies and advocates in other states.”

“This is a problem in many states. Kids in foster care face so many challenges. And what happened is with the growth of psychotropic medications prescribed for all sorts of mental health issues, we have fallen into a system where it is easier to give a child a pill than to be patient and engage in therapies.”

## Education is not a privilege — it’s a right...



**...But** in Georgia’s largest county jail, the right to an education is being systematically denied to students with disabilities.

That’s why last year Children’s Rights, Atlanta law firm Bondurant Mixson & Elmore and the Barton Juvenile Defender Clinic at Emory University School of Law filed a lawsuit on behalf of incarcerated youth who have a right to special education services. The lawsuit alleges that the DeKalb County Jail is violating federal statutes that guarantee every child the opportunity to be educated.

US Federal law clearly spells out the essential right of

every student, including incarcerated students, to a fair and appropriate education. That includes the specially designed instruction necessary for students with disabilities to ensure their academic success.

“DeKalb County Jail is utterly failing young people with disabilities who already face an uphill path to a better life. We want to send a message to these children: you are worth educating; we are not giving up on you. An education is a transformative experience that you deserve – and that’s what we are fighting for,” said Randee Waldman, Director of the Barton Juvenile Defender Clinic at Emory University School of Law.

The percentage of incarcerated youth with disabilities is far greater than the national average. Between 30% and 70% of young adults in detention qualify for special education services and accommodations – as compared to 14% of public school students in the general population.

The lawsuit calls on public education and county jail officials to work together to develop a plan for ensuring that special education services are provided to all eligible students.



# SAVE THE DATE

SEPT. 10,  
ATLANTA

OCT. 26,  
NYC

## 2020 ATLANTA BENEFIT GALA & INSPIRATION AWARDS

Honoring  
**Delta Airlines**  
for its commitment to  
fighting human trafficking  
and  
**Talley Wells**, a pioneering  
disability rights attorney  
and  
**Greg Hecht**, Chair of the  
Southern Steering Committee

## 2020 BENEFIT & INSPIRATION AWARDS

Honoring  
**Cyndi Lauper**  
for her work advocating for  
LGBTQ homeless youth  
and  
longtime Board Member,  
**Dan Galpern**  
for his 20 years on the  
Board of Directors,  
among others

Purchase pre-sale tickets and sponsorship at [childrensrights.org](https://childrensrights.org)  
All proceeds from our events sponsor advocacy and legal action to protect  
abused and neglected children across America.

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# #RememberMe:

## Join Children's Rights for Foster Care Awareness Month

This May, Children's Rights will feature youth stories and help spread awareness about the work we are doing to keep America's most vulnerable children safe and healthy. Stay tuned! Visit [childrensrights.org](http://childrensrights.org).



## Look Good and Do Good!



The new Children's Rights Swag Store is up and running. From tote bags and umbrellas to t-shirts and even a onesie for your baby, there's a little something for everyone to shop for a good cause.

..... Visit [childrensrights.org/store](http://childrensrights.org/store)! .....

To make a gift to Children's Rights, visit [www.childrensrights.org](http://www.childrensrights.org) and click "Donate Now."

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PROTECTING KIDS.  
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