



EVERYCHILD  
FOUNDATION

WOMEN REINVENTING  
PHILANTHROPY®  
November 2012

## Public Counsel and Alliance for Children's Rights Awarded 2012 Everychild \$1 Million Grant

THE MISSION of the Everychild Foundation is to ease suffering of children in the Greater Los Angeles area whether due to disease, disability, abuse, neglect or poverty.



*Everychild's 2012 grant will promote successful adoptions and guardianships in Los Angeles.*

The team of Public Counsel and the Alliance for Children's Rights has been selected to receive the 2012 \$1 million grant from the Everychild Foundation. The grant will help create the first large-scale project in the nation to provide comprehensive legal and social services to adoptive and guardianship families within Los Angeles to improve the long-term success of placements.

Called the "Everychild Families Forever Project", the grant will enable the expansion of the existing highly successful Adoption Project

created by the two agencies in 1977 to reduce the number of children waiting for adoption. The grant

***"Through this grant, the lives of children who are adopted from foster care can be dramatically improved."***

money will ensure that adopted and guardianship children and their families can take advantage of the full

continuum of services and benefits available that will help them to thrive.

Public Counsel is the largest *pro bono*

law firm in the country. One of its major goals is to protect the rights of disadvantaged children. The Alliance for Children's Rights focuses solely on protecting the rights of abused and impoverished children.

Although both agencies have worked together for many years to help complete adoptions and guardianships, they realized there is a crisis of poor long-term outcomes for many children adopted from foster or guardianship care.

The Los Angeles County foster care system is the largest in the nation with 25,000 children living in out-of-home care. Research shows that children fare better in adoptive or guardianship families than in institutions or long-term foster care.

However, many of these children have untreated mental health problems that lead to poor outcomes. Further, up to 10 percent of foster care adoptions "disrupt", and the children go back into the system.

"Through this grant," says Carla Buck, Chair of the Everychild Grant Screening Board, "the lives of children who are adopted from foster care can be dramatically improved."

While more than 75 percent of adoptive parents need one or more post adoptive services, less than half

## 2012 Grantee *(continued from previous page)*

assessment, pre-and post-adoption study, advocacy, completion of adoptions and guardianships, long-term follow up, and a post-adoption and guardianship study. Grant funds will be used to provide services and project implementation and will support four new staff members.

Over two years, 2,900 adoptions and guardianships will be completed (an increase of 400 over current levels) and of those families, 2,230 will receive a comprehensive needs assessment, 870 children will receive critical services and support for special education needs, 580 will receive support for mental health needs and 725 families will receive additional adoption assistance benefits. Through this program, these children and their families will receive the support they need to be successful.

### Who Will Benefit? A Story from Real Life

Nicole was born drug and alcohol addicted and suffered abuse from both her birth family and her early foster parents. She was eventually placed with a loving foster family, but by age seven appeared to have cognitive impairment. As she was also attacking people and injuring herself, her social worker recommended she be institutionalized.

Nicole's foster mother sought assistance from The Adoption Project, created by the Alliance for Children's Rights/Public Counsel. The Adoption Project staff agreed that Nicole would be better off in a loving family than in an institution, and assistance was provided for the adoption of Nicole and her three siblings. However, it was still difficult to obtain the services needed for Nicole. The mother again turned to the Adoption Project. Their lawyers waged a two-year battle to get Nicole the services needed to address her mental disability and fetal alcohol syndrome.

Nicole has been with her adoptive mother for seven years. It took five years of therapy before she stopped injuring herself or would allow herself to be hugged and say, "I love you". But Nicole is now thriving, having won awards at school and entered high school.

Her foster mother happily reports that Nicole has dreams for the future. She wants to work at Disneyland or with animals.

#### The Bottom Line

Without the services Nicole was given, she would have lived out her life in an institution and become a burden

## Venice Family Clinic

Each year, Everychild's Grant Screening Board selects two finalists. They make a presentation at the Grant Hearing held in October, and members vote to determine the new grantee. Unfortunately, we can only fund one.

This year, the runner-up was Venice Family Clinic who requested funds to complete the construction of a comprehensive pediatric care facility in Mar Vista.

For more information on the Venice Family Clinic and their plans for the new pediatric facility, go to their website at [www.venicefamilyclinic.org](http://www.venicefamilyclinic.org).



Grant Screening Board Chair, Carla Buck (center) with Susan Brauneiss (left), Team Leader for Public Counsel/Alliance and Michele Lynch, Team Leader for Venice Family Clinic.

### Everychild 2013 Calendar

January	Letters of Inquiry due from applicants
March	Everychild Annual Spring Luncheon
June	Two grant finalists announced
October	Grant Hearing

# A Voice for Children: A Q&A with Denise McCain-Tharnstrom, Everychild Public Policy Committee Chair



Denise McCain-Tharnstrom

**What does the Public Policy Committee do?** Through issue-focused education and advocacy on behalf of at-risk children, PPC is charged with advancing the Foundation's mission of easing the suffering of local children.

**Is the committee busy?** Yes! Committee members educate Everychild's members, the community and elected officials about the challenges facing vulnerable and at-risk children. We also participate with like-minded groups to find solutions to help these often ignored children.

**What does the policy community think about your work?** Since its establishment, the PPC has rapidly become known throughout LA County for its policy contributions.

**What are the committee's current focus areas?** Our focus includes four areas: 1) children in the foster care system, 2) homeless children and youth, 3) infants and toddlers aged 0-3 years, and 4) children in the juvenile

justice system.

**Which accomplishments make you most proud?** I am proud of the difference women on our committee are making in raising awareness about the needs of homeless youth, working on behalf of probation youth, and leading a county-wide public/private partnership to build community support for local infants and toddlers. I am also proud of the system we developed to vet important pending legislation and send e-alerts to mobilize interested Everychild members to support needed reforms in foster care.

**What inspires you to spend your free time on this effort?** I have been involved in policy work most of my adult life - whether as a member of my former town's Environmental Policy Board, pursuing graduate work in the field while my children were at home, teaching (at the USC School of Public Policy), writing or speaking... So, urging my fellow Everychild executive board members to consider the creation of a policy committee was a natural outgrowth of not only my passion for making a difference, but also my interests in helping others realize the difference they can make.

**Any advice for Everychild members?** My advice is this: Being a voice for children doesn't require formal training in law or policy, or lots of time or academic expertise - it is possible for anyone who cares.

**How does the committee select its members?** Committee membership is open to *any* Everychild member

who wishes to join and has an interest in learning more about advocacy of policy associated with the needs of children. No prior advocacy or policy experience is required. There are no term limits or caps on committee membership and there are many different ways to participate on the committee.

## SB 9 Update

On September 30th, California Governor Brown signed SB 9, a law that offers some criminal offenders a chance at eventual parole for crimes committed as minors. Everychild members were very involved in advocating for its passage by making calls, writing letters and visiting with state legislators.

The new law allows those sentenced to life without the possibility of parole and who were minors at the time of their crimes to ask the sentencing court to review their case and consider permitting parole after serving 25 years in prison.

The United States is the only nation in the world that sentences youth to die in prison, a practice condemned by many and recently outlawed by the U.S. Supreme Court in states where it is mandatory. However, in California courts, such sentences were discretionary, necessitating legislation to stop the practice.

Everychild members emphasized to the lawmakers the recent scientific research showing that the adolescent brain is not fully developed until age 25, especially the frontal lobe, which



## Make a Perfect Pitch

For Everychild members who want to help us recruit new members or simply inform others about the foundation's work in a simple way, here is some useful information on how to make your point in the timespan of an elevator ride.



“Elevator Pitch” is the name given to any short description of a point you want to make.

Here are the basics of an elevator pitch:

- Be concise – 25 to 30 seconds
- Show enthusiasm
- Explain the benefits of your approach
- Make a call for action

Here's a sample pitch:

*“I'm involved with the Everychild Foundation, and I'm very excited about it. The Foundation has more than 200 women members, each donating \$5,000 annually. There are zero fund-raising events. The money is pooled to make a single annual \$1 million grant targeting one Los Angeles area non-profit for an innovative dream project filling a critical unmet need of local children.*

*Everychild's committees carefully screen the grant applicants and determine two finalists who present to the entire membership at an annual grant hearing. Every member has an equal vote in the final selection, and once awarded, all grants are monitored to ensure they are going according to plan.*

*There's no time commitment required of members, but for those interested, there are lots of ways to get involved – some involve a little time, some quite a lot. We also have very interesting evening salons for the entire membership throughout the year with great speakers on children's issues.*

*Maybe you would be interested in joining Everychild. It's over a decade old, has served over half a million children so far, and has given more than \$10 million in targeted grants that have made a big difference in our community.”*

Help us recruit new members! Make a perfect pitch for Everychild.

*Membership in the Everychild Foundation is open to all women interested in helping Los Angeles children in need. The annual contribution is \$5,000 and is tax-deductible. To join, send an email to [info@everychildfoundation.org](mailto:info@everychildfoundation.org) or call 310-573-2153. We will respond immediately.*



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EIN # 31-1693985



## Thanks to Each Everychild Member for Making Our 2012 \$1 Million Grant Possible!

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