From the Editor’s Desk
It’s takes a system to change a system...

In the last two years Connecticut has taken some extraordinary steps in the reformation of its juvenile justice system. The Department of Children and Families and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch have a joint juvenile justice plan for the first time ever, the Family With Service Needs system has been completely overhauled and soon Connecticut will “Raise the Age” of jurisdiction from 16 to 18. There are still miles to go before we sleep – but I don’t think that any of us in our wildest dreams could have imagined that we’d be able to get this far this fast. The reason for this progress? A broad, diverse, wide-ranging network of individuals and organizations committed to change, committed to teamwork and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for Connecticut’s children and communities.

It’s humbling to think about the people engaged in these efforts – their different responsibilities, different experiences, different professional and personal “hats” – and each one’s essential role.

State officials from a variety of agencies came to the table with a willingness to work with advocates, families and legislators. They came to meetings, spearheaded working groups, provided data and, most importantly, shared their expertise and “insider perspective” about how real change would be possible.

Providers of services and programming have stepped up to promote effective practices, talk about innovative ways to better serve kids and been invaluable resources, engaging with these young people and their families on a daily basis.

Legislators have stepped up as partners – listening as advocates, families, providers, and state officials tell them what’s going on and what could work better, sharing their feedback about how to successfully promote legislative change, and serving as champions and shepherds of important, historic bills.

Advocates for children and families in the areas of education, juvenile justice, mental health, etc. have all come together as a team, knowing that children very rarely touch just one of these sectors and that when we work together to improve one system – we improve them all.

Families and youth with personal experience in “the system” have provided what none of the rest of us can, the real story from one who lived (or is living) it. They spoke through their emotions, through their fear and sometimes through their pain to share with all of us how the decisions we make and the policies we set effect actual children and families. They let us know what would work for them, what they need, how they and their children can be held accountable in ways that promote real change, real growth, real progress.

A system of change agents has been created. It’s a system that was built on, fostered by and promotes, more than anything else, hope. We’ve seen that change can happen, we’ve seen that a group of people, committed to making a difference CAN make that difference, and we’ve seen that hope is powerful. Great things are happening in CT. Even greater things are possible. Here’s hoping…

Abby Anderson, Senior Policy Associate
Janet Ortiz began ministering in the Bridgeport Juvenile Detention Center in 1993 and quickly noticed the correlation between the adolescents’ behavior issues and low academic achievement. Improved school performance, she thought, would curb their behavioral problems. She focused her energy on finding individuals who genuinely cared about these young people and gave them the training necessary to become mentors. As mentors, they addressed the needs of the youth and saw drastic changes in their lives. Ms. Ortiz’s vision truly blossomed when she helped develop the Prime Time Intensive Mentoring Program, a subset of the Nehemiah Commission.

The Nehemiah Commission, originally adult-focused, was founded in 1985 by Pastor Michael Hawkins of Greater Bridgeport Christian Fellowship. While working with Pastor Hawkins, Ms. Ortiz and others recognized the growing needs of children and teens and the Nehemiah Commission changed its focus to at-risk youth and their families. Prime Time Intensive Mentoring is designed to provide support for young people who, because of academic failure, involvement in the juvenile justice system, substance abuse, family discord, or behavioral or emotional challenges are in jeopardy of not experiencing success.

Seventy families are currently involved with the Nehemiah Commission. Prime Time Intensive Mentoring receives referrals for youth ages 5-18 from the Department of Children and Families, the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, the Bridgeport Systems of Care and Connecticut Renaissance. Mentors work in collaboration with a licensed clinician, the parent/guardian, school and any other community stakeholders to develop treatments that will help the young person succeed; they spend at least three hours a week with each youth, and may mentor up to five youth at once.

The Nehemiah Commission is a faith-based organization with a goal to provide young people with models of strong values, like forgiveness, honesty, respect and integrity. Ms. Ortiz hopes that these positive examples of healthy lifestyles will influence the youth to live their lives in the same fashion. Ms. Ortiz puts it this way: “Mentors work to bring light to dark situations.”

The goal of Prime Time is to empower not only the youth but their parents as well. School advocates help parents to understand their and their children’s educational rights. Prime Time works to provide families with skills, support and resources that will help them develop tools to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. The Nehemiah Commission is meant to be a bridge toward achieving family unity. “We work with other agencies because we can’t do everything,” Ms. Ortiz says. “We need to do what we do well and we do mentoring well.”

For more information contact Janet Ortiz at 203.384.6158.
The 2007 regular legislative session ended on June 6th without a budget, necessitating a special session through the end of June. Despite the delay, the session finally ended with important successes related to the Alliance’s two main legislative priorities of 2007. Significant changes highlight Connecticut’s shift towards offering services and programs to young people early, preventing their movement farther into the juvenile justice system and holding youth accountable in developmentally appropriate ways. Bills passed that enhance Family With Service Needs programming and “Raise the Age.” Here’s a round up of key legislation:

**Raise the Age**

**S.B. 1196—An Act Concerning Children and Youth in Juvenile Matters**

This bill enacts the statute change to extend jurisdiction in delinquency matters and proceedings to children aged sixteen and seventeen.

**H.B. 6285—An Act Concerning Children and Youth in Juvenile Matters and the Recommendations of the Juvenile Jurisdiction Planning and Implementation Committee**

This bill includes the statute from S.B. 1196 and outlines details of implementation. The plan calls for drastically increasing the services and programs suited to the developmental needs of 16- and 17-year-olds as well as prevention and diversion programs for all young people; establishing Regional Courts that will hear juvenile matters cases; and establishing a Policy and Operations Coordinating Council.

**What Happened:** S.B. 1196 passed through the Senate but the end of the session prevented a House vote. The Raise the Age concept was carried over into the special legislative session and language from both S.B. 1196 and H.B. 6285 became Sections 73-88 of the general government budget implementer bill No. 1500.

**Families with Service Needs**

**H.B. 5676—An Act Concerning Children of Families with Service Needs**

This legislation also went into the special session and became Section 30 of the general government budget implementer bill No. 1500. Under the new legislation, before a FWSN petition is filed by the probation officer, the family must be offered voluntary services through regional Family Support Centers. Family Support Centers will roll out in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury in 2007 and expand to six more areas in 2008. These Centers will guarantee response to a family in need within 24 hours and provide: screening and assessment at the initial stage of the process, immediate crisis intervention, family mediation, educational advocacy, community-based mental health treatment (including trauma treatment), pro-social activities and short-term respite beds for boys and girls.

**Other JJ-related**

**H.B. 7350—An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions**

This bill reflects an effort to reduce school suspensions and address the school-to-prison-pipeline by eliminating excessive and unnecessary out-of-school suspensions. Under the new law, schools must use in-school suspension whenever possible. A student may be punished with out-of-school suspension for conduct (1) that violates a publicized board policy or seriously disrupts the educational process or (2) on school grounds or at a school sponsored activity, that endangers persons or property. The bill passed in both the House and the Senate and was signed by Governor Rell.
Nearly all “career criminals” begin as juvenile offenders who become entrenched in the justice system. Improving programs and reforms for juvenile offenders would decrease the numbers who become experienced, serious criminals as adults, ultimately having a huge impact on crime rates and individual lives.

In Changing Lives: Delinquency Prevention as Crime-Control Policy, Peter Greenwood surveys the literature on delinquency prevention and intervention programs in the U.S. and identifies those that have proven, through rigorous evaluations and sound evidence, to be the most successful.

Of the hundreds of delinquency-prevention programs implemented in the past two decades, only about 8 percent have been evaluated and shown to have positive effects. The vast majority—some 90 percent of programs—have no evidence-based support; they either have not been evaluated, or have been evaluated with a research design too flawed to determine significant effects.

Effective, evidence-based delinquency-prevention programs do exist. Changing Lives shows that the best return on taxpayers’ investment comes from programs that focus primarily on training, empowering, and sometimes assisting the families and guardians of troubled adolescents. The best programs use multiple methods to achieve results, from parent education or family therapy to enhancing services traditionally found in schools. Admittedly, the analysis has limits: most of these programs have not been widely replicated and there are many programs for which cost-benefit data are not available. Despite these drawbacks, cost-effectiveness provides a rational method of allocating resources in a way that will benefit taxpayers, potential victims, and youth.

Any involvement with the police or juvenile courts carries a heavy stigma for the youth concerned, along with a proven negative impact on educational attainment and employment. Therefore, whenever possible, troubled juveniles should be treated outside the justice system, in natural settings, by professionals familiar with the healthy development and social welfare of youth. This leaves the juvenile justice system responsible only for youth who are already in the system.

The juvenile court stands at the nexus of prevention and punishment, with multiple opportunities for highly focused interventions. Each of the major stages of decision-making in the system—from arrest and intake screening to adjudication and placement—is an opportunity for formal or informal linkage to treatment programs, preferably in a community setting. Difficult as treatment may be at this point, the fact that these youths are high-risk targets also means that an effective program can yield greater benefits for the money spent.

Connecticut can increase the effectiveness of its delinquency prevention programs. Working together, policymakers, practitioners and communities must demand evidence-based programs; an easier process for programs, especially those run by smaller organizations, to become evidence-based; implementation of those programs with a high degree of fidelity to the original model; strong evaluation of the programs’ implementation, how youth are assigned to those programs and the results; use of cost-effectiveness criteria to allocate funding; and support for research on programs that involve families.

Dr. Peter Greenwood is a Fellow of the Academy of Experimental Criminology and recipient of the August Vollmer Award from American Society of Criminology. His most recent book is entitled Changing Lives: Delinquency Prevention as Crime Control Policy. Dr. Greenwood has served on the Advisory Board for the Blueprints Project, and as the founding Director of the RAND Corporation’s Criminal Justice Program. He currently serves on the Board of VisionQuest and as a private consultant to other juvenile corrections organizations attempting to make their programs more evidence-based.
The CTJJA Art Gallery

This month’s artwork comes from the boys in the art therapy group at Connecticut Juvenile Training School. The youth involved range in age from 12-16. The art therapy program has been operating over seven years, and consists of varied groups. All the boys participate in art therapy in a large group format when they arrive at CJTS and later can be involved in smaller group settings for specialized projects such as mural painting. Thank you to the young men at CJTS for sharing their acrylic paintings with us. For more information feel free to contact art therapists Marta Cunha or Julie Nearing at 860-638-2657 or email Julie.Nearing@ct.gov.
Research Finds

**Bureau of Justice Statistics: Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006**

The Bureau of Justice Statistics presents data on prison and jail inmates collected from National Prisoner Statistics counts and the Annual Survey of Jails, 2006. This annual report provides the number of inmates and the overall incarceration rate per 100,000 residents for each state and the Federal system. It offers trends since 2000 and percentage changes in prison populations since midyear and yearend 2005. It includes total numbers for prison and jail inmates by gender, race, and Hispanic origin as well as counts of jail inmates by conviction status and confinement status. The report can be found at: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/pjim06.htm.

**Truancy Reduction Program Tool Kit Available**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is offering an online truancy reduction tool kit for communities interested in instituting a truancy reduction program. It provides resources and information to guide communities, schools and parents in addressing the problem of truancy. OJJDP’s Tool Kit is available at: http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/publications/PubAbstract.asp?pubi=238899.

**Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) Up for Reauthorization**

The JJDPA is up for reauthorization in Congress this year. A new coalition, Act 4 Juvenile Justice, is working to ensure that the Act is renewed and sets strong federal standards for care and custody of young people while also supporting community safety. Organizations can sign on to the Act 4 Juvenile Justice Statement of Principles. To view the Statement of Principles, go to: http://njjn.org/media/resources/public/resource_475.pdf.

**American Prospect Article Discredits National Crime Wave Claim**

In his article, *What Wave?,* Marc Mauer, executive director of The Sentencing Project, contends that evidence for a national crime wave, particularly as reported by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), is inconclusive. Mauer suggests that calls for increased “get-tough remedies” are misguided. Read the entire article online at: www.prospect.org/web/page.ww?section=root&name=ViewWeb&articleId=12601.

**OJJDP National Report Reviews Data on Juvenile Offending**


**Dangers of Detention**

This new report from the Justice Policy Institute looks at the consequences of detention on young people, their families, and communities. The policy brief shows that, given the new findings that detaining youth may not make communities safer, the costs of unnecessarily detaining young people are simply too high. View Dangers of Detention online at: http://www.justicepolicy.org/reports_jl/11-28-06_dangers/press_dangers_11-28-06.html.

**Public Opinion Favors Juvenile Justice System**

Florida State University Associate Professor Daniel P. Mears’ rigorous study indicates positive public attitudes towards the juvenile justice system. To read the article highlighting Mears’ findings, visit: http://www.fsu.com/pages/2007/02/19/JuvenileJusticeSystem.html.

**What Works, Wisconsin: Research to Practice Brief**

*Program Fidelity and Adaptation: Meeting local needs without compromising program effectiveness* addresses the difficult questions of whether and how to adapt evidence-based programs in your jurisdiction. The entire series is available at: www.uwex.edu/ces/glp/families/whatworks.cfm.
College student organizers contributed immense force and energy to the Raise the Age campaign. Students participated from Fairfield University, Quinnipiac University, Wesleyan University, Yale University, Connecticut College and Southern Connecticut State University. We wanted to highlight their efforts here.

Kyle O’Brien is a graduating social work major at Southern Connecticut State University. He spent this school year as an intern at New Haven Superior Court within the Division of Public Defender Services. For his advanced social welfare policy course, he chose to follow and lobby for “Raise the Age.” Kyle kept his class updated on the bills and had his classmates sign and send postcards to legislators. Because of his intern experience, Kyle was able to give legislators first-hand anecdotes about young clients that he saw in the court system and also those locked up in adult jails.

This was Wesleyan’s second year participating in the campaign. Students first got involved last year through a student-led forum that grew out of a desire to close the Connecticut Juvenile Training School. Professor Jen Tilton helped the students organize for juvenile justice reform, which included “Raise the Age.” This year they held calling events at the school library to both educate students and empower them to contact their legislators. They consistently kept the issue present on campus—through letter writing and postcard signings, film showings, and weekly discussions about juvenile justice. For these students, “Raise the Age” is one small step in addressing the larger prison crisis in the United States. Wesleyan student Kate Reil believes that “to truly effect any long lasting, effective policy change, it is crucial not to forget the bigger picture of social injustices in this country.”

Nick Handler and fourteen other Yale students also maintained a consistent presence on campus through tabling and stopping students as they walked by, in total sending hundreds of phone calls and postcards to legislators. They held a public screening of “Juvies” that was well attended by students and community members, followed by an informational session, discussion and letter writing. Yale students also took “Raise the Age” into the local community. They facilitated informational sessions at New Haven Academy, Wilbur Cross High School and Project APOYO. The teens were engaged in the issue, spoke up in discussions and wrote personal letters to legislators. In the future, Nick plans to organize Yale students as mentors for teens transitioning out of Manson Youth Institution.

Connecticut College student Dave Kaplan worked last summer as an intern with the Campaign for Youth Justice in Washington, DC. He spent time at detention centers, interviewing and meeting with inmates. Dave said that those conversations “opened my eyes to the problems with the juvenile system and the harsh reality of the adult system… I became incredibly passionate about making changes.” When he returned to Connecticut, Dave joined the Raise the Age campaign, collaborating with the student leaders at Wesleyan and Yale. At Connecticut College, students held meetings, led workshops, showed “Juvies,” flooded the campus with posters and fliers and distributed buttons to spark interest in the issue. Dave also had an article published in his school paper.

Nicole Pascale, who will be a senior in the fall at Quinnipiac University, interned this spring at CTJJA, organizing community members, keeping updated on the bills and contacting legislators. When asked what she learned through the internship, Nicole responded: “There is a ton of work that has to be done to get new legislation to pass! I never knew that it had to go through so many stages and get passed by numerous groups and committees.”

It does take a ton of work to pass legislation, and we are grateful for the time and energy these college students contributed to keeping youth out of the adult criminal justice system. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of Connecticut’s children!
The *Raise the Age* Campaign never could have been successful without the active participation of countless individuals and organizations. Some have been engaged in the efforts for years; some joined in two weeks ago. You all played a part, and you all made this happen, and we want to say THANK YOU!

We don’t have space to list all the names (and in fact, in this technological age, we may not even be aware of all the people who were active in this campaign) but we would like to recognize the immense variety of people who were involved. Thank you to our Steering Committee, our funders, legislative champions, lawyers, judges, state agencies, parent advocates, child advocates, college professors, high school teachers, college and high school students, faith-based groups, our co-workers, our families, people from Stamford to Willimantic, Seattle to Albany. Thank you for the thousands of postcards you sent to the legislature, the hundreds of emails or phone calls to your legislators each week of the session, the films you showed, organizing and attending rallies, spreading the word, educating others and keeping momentum strong.