

SOCIETY *Scene*

November 18, 2009

On the Scene

Florida Children First honors foster care advocates and graduates

More than 100 child advocates, lawyers, judges and politicians gathered at the Gunster Yoakley law firm offices in West Palm Beach on October 22, 2009, to honor those in Palm Beach County who are making a difference in the lives of foster children.

Florida's Children First (FCF) Executive Director Christina Spudeas and President Howard Talenfeld, a staunch child advocate and partner with Colodny Fass Talenfeld Karlinsky & Abate, led the event, which raised more than \$20,000 and honored local foster care advocates and one young adult who successfully made it through the system.

Even in a down economy FCF is fortunate to be supported by individuals who open up their hearts and their purse strings to support programs for our state's foster children," said

Spudeas.

This year's honorees included Nora Collins-Mandeville, Mari Frankel, and Rita and Les Gorenflo for their foster child advocacy work. Foster care "graduate" Obadiah Payton was also recognized for his successful transition into independent living.

"These individuals have that you can help change outcomes for foster children by simply by getting involved in a foster child's life," said Talenfeld. Collins-Mandeville was honored for her passion for children who have aged out of foster care, her natural ability to connect with young people and her search to find a better way for Florida's child serving systems.

Frankel was selected for her participation in community, civic and educational programs involving children and families. Her relentless and "hands on" efforts in such organizations as

Adopt-A-Family and Project GROW have contributed to many of the agencies' successful events.

The Gorenflos are recognized for their love and compassion for all children, especially those at-risk or with disabilities. Together, they have adopted a total of seven children, making them true exemplary role models.

This year's youth honoree,

Payton, is recognized for his successful "graduation" out of foster care. He was recently awarded a mini-grant to convene a summit addressing mental health issues and is actively involved in statewide initiatives to improve mental health services including those involving youth transitioning to adulthood.

For more information, visit www.floridaskidfirst.org.



FCF Board of Directors: Richard Filson, left, Denise Manning, Julie Talenfeld, Howard Talenfeld, FCF President, and Alan Mishaal



Michael Dolco, left, Tara DuPree, and Howard Talenfeld