

Spotlight on Community:



Center For Parental Responsibility

...restoring, preserving, and protecting freedom for fractured families

By Molly Olson

Editor's note: Members of the William Mitchell community include non-student individuals and groups who share our facilities. Here is an opportunity to get to know one of these groups

In September 2004, the Center for Parental Responsibility ("CPR") is celebrating their one year anniversary of monthly meetings at William Mitchell

College of Law ("WMCL"). CPR is a non-profit organization that focuses on legal research and family law education for non-custodial parents ("NCP").

Is it in Aug. 2004? See above

In the spring of 2000, CPR founder, Molly K Olson and her partner began conversing with WMCL Professor Peter Erlinder about the constitutional violations in family law. Molly credits Professor Erlinder for propelling CPR's passion for family law reform. CPR was founded in January of 2003 and meetings began around Molly's kitchen table to draft a bill for the Minnesota legislature, which was introduced 6 weeks later. By the end of that summer, because of such large turnouts, they outgrew the only available meeting space – her home garage. WMCL had been a preferred law library for their legal research. Therefore, Molly approached WMCL about available meeting space at the school. CPR had been working with several attorneys who were

WMCL alumni, and are advisors to the organization, so the school seemed like a perfect fit.

CPR's experience indicates here is often unwarranted systemic bias against one parent to benefit the other; resulting in the bifurcation of the family when one parent is labeled a NCP. As a retired appellate court judge stated, this results in an "artificially created class" often resulting in equal protection violations. While the majority of NCP's are dads, the group has also assisted non-custodial moms, who find themselves treated with the same disdain from a very unforgiving family law system.

CPR aims to prevent bias in family law, and remove the obstacles that prevent both parents from being fully and equally involved in the lives of their children after divorce or in cases of never-married parents. This is a critical aspect in the promotion of responsible parenting. CPR spends a great deal of their efforts attempting to protect the constitutional rights of both parents, and the rights of children to have equal access to both parents. Research indicates that except in cases that rise to the "imminent harm standard," it is always in the best interest of children to have both parents equally involved.

CPR is a 100% volunteer

organization continually looking for volunteers with various talents ranging from marketing, fundraising, accounting, writing, and legal skills. CPR especially needs volunteers from the legal community willing to assist in casework. CPR works with many "working class" parents who have become "working poor" and are unable to afford an attorney, and find themselves overwhelmed and steamrolled by the legal system. Except for Hennepin County residents, there are no legal resources in the state of Minnesota for low-income non-custodial parents with family law issues.

Examples of current CPR cases needing legal help:

- Developmentally disabled 44 year old man living out of his car needs legal advice to defend him for a contempt of court due to spousal maintenance arrears.
- Non-custodial 43 year old mom who, as a displaced homemaker, lost her job and ran out of unemployment benefits is seeking legal advice because Anoka County is taking legal action to suspend her driver's license due to child support arrears, causing a frustration of performance.
- Two never-married fit 20-something parents seek joint physical custody of their child. The court appointed custody evaluator agrees joint

interest of the child; however, the evaluator says "I can't recommend joint physical custody in my report because I know this judge doesn't believe joint physical custody is ever right, and he will never allow it."

CPR meets at WMCL the third Sunday night of every month from 5-8pm. Guest speakers, who are attorneys, judges, psychologists, or other family law professionals, speak and answer audience questions from 5:30-7pm. The meetings are FREE and they are open to the public. WMCL students are encouraged to attend. For more information see www.cpr-mn.org.

Upcoming Meetings:

Sunday September 19, 2004 – Guest Speaker: Family Law Attorney's Traci Capistrant and Rebecca Wong, WMCL graduates, "Helping your lawyer prepare your case information for best results."

Meeting 5-8pm,
speaker 5:30-7pm.

Sunday October 17, 2004 – Guest Speaker: Retired Dakota County District Court Judge Duane Harves, "The judicial perspective regarding the current state of family law."

Meeting 5-8pm,
speaker 5:30-7pm

Sounds like the parents agree, so why is there a custody evaluator in the first place?

Interesting, switching sole custody to the father after mother was homemaker.

AND Probably AFCC-connected. See WMCOL Professor Nancy Ver Steegh's AFCC connectns, longstanding at the college.

I also knew a (not disabled) mother working FT at middle-class professional wages forced homeless (living from her truck) after DV case, the situation caused by wage-garnishment to below living conditions (also in the Midwest – cold winters...

Dean Onkka...

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schools in the Twin Cities makes things more difficult for William Mitchell students. There is a real need for students to think ahead about managing their careers. Our new mission at Career Services is to help students find a challenging job that meets their individual needs, and it involves a certain degree of creativity in a tight job market.

Q What can students do to make themselves more marketable?

Dean Onkka: First, students need to refine skills

relating to their job search process. This includes mastering interviewing, resumes, callbacks, and researching career opportunities. Second, students need to network. Networking is a very powerful tool, if it is perceived as learning about a career or environment, not as cocktail party chatter. It is also important to develop relationships with people who can speak to your skills and capabilities.

Finally, internships, externships, and volunteering are all things that give students a tremendous background to bring to an interview.

Q The Career Services office reports that approximately

15% of students get their eventual jobs through OCI. There is a concern among students that this is a very small percentage. What are your feelings about OCI, and how do you address these concerns?

Dean Onkka: I think that OCI is a necessary part of law school, because it is the only way certain law firms and corporations hire summer associates and clerks. The percentage certainly indicates that OCI is only one of many ways that William Mitchell students obtain jobs. I think there needs to be an equal emphasis on other, non-OCI employers, and ways of help-

ing students connect with these other employers. Also, I think we need to do a better job of connecting with Alumni. A number of things have been done very well by Career Services, and now we have the exciting chance to build other programs. We would like to make the Career Services programs much more powerful for those students looking for employment outside of OCI. We are also in the process of hiring someone in the Career Services office who will be taking a look at making alternative programs more effective for students.



On Seeing *The Manchurian Candidate* with My Father: A Review

("LGH" (my) annotations:

Previous page features CPR-MN.org + noncustodial parents, mostly Dads, needing help because of the unfair family law system, lead promoter a woman Molly Olson. Here, a student (?) author reminisces fondly about her father (no reference to a mother) and growing up in his house. What this has to do with the field of law or relevance to a student newspaper at a law school in major metropolitan area within Minnesota, isn't mentioned directly.

by Carolyn Tuttle

My father has seen the original but I have not. Being younger, I am often stuck with the glossy newness of things. My movies become a blur of high-tech and speed-up. They are the MTV remakes of his movies—the classics the hip say are better. But tonight is his suggestion; we catch *The Manchurian Candidate* together at the mall where I worked when I

was a teenager in Syracuse, New York.

Every time I return to Syracuse I'm surprised by how rundown the buildings look. I imagine all the houses sitting perfect in a well-kept and sunny neighborhood. But when I get there, I see how the porches hang from the houses. Stores have closed, their windows covered in newspaper. The sky is typically overcast. I'm not sure if it was always this way or if

it's my view of the city that's changing. Even the mall looks different. I notice broken and scuffed tiles, birds nesting in the rafters above the food court.

As we stand in line to buy popcorn, my father explains how the old version of *The Manchurian Candidate* starred Frank Sinatra. The old version, his version, had the Korean War. Mine replaces them with Denzel Washington and Desert Storm.

My version turns out to have Meryl Streep, a great actress, playing a corrupt senator. My version has the fantasy of advanced science. There are implants in the back of soldiers' shoulders and we watch in horror as Denzel Washington cuts his out with a knife. There is the FBI, the clock counting down, the evil doctor plotting.

But somehow I'm not impressed. On the way out, I ask my father what he thought of this movie. He gives an apathetic shrug. "It's

okay. In the old one, it wasn't the Denzel Washington character that took care of things in the end." "Oh," I say. I want to know my father's version of the movie too. I want to hang onto it—but the old version seems unattainably remote. I can't quite picture its scenes.

Back home in Minneapolis, I take out the Yellow Pages and set them on my lap. One by one, I call all the video stores in my area. None have the old version of *The Manchurian Candidate* available. I have a feeling that this is somehow for the best. In my mind, it will always be my father's version of the movie—ten times better than the one we saw in Syracuse. It will be shined to perfection, the way I remember the mall when it was new and I was growing up in my father's house.



the phrase
"in my Father's house"
has positive religious meaning for Christians (attributed to Jesus returning to God his Father, preparing an ideal future home for the disciples), no doubt on the readers (context: Minnesota as a Midwestern State)