



FOCUSING ON FAMILY JUSTICE

BY CHRIS MEIGHER

WITH A PROUD TIP OF *QUEST'S* CAP to Mayor Mike Bloomberg and his fine team, the concept of “family justice” has become an accessible reality throughout our beloved city.

Managed by the Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence and supported by private donations to the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, the Family Justice Center Initiative is a public-private partnership that provides critical services to victims of domestic violence and their children. These Family Justice Centers (FJCs) help victims regain their personal dignity, and put them on a path toward recovery and self-sufficiency. Moreover, the centers provide free assistance, shelter, and counseling, all under one roof, affording them the opportunity to legally protect themselves and eventually rebuild their lives. Since Mayor Bloomberg launched this initiative in 2005, the city’s three centers in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens have received over 180,000

client visits, and have helped more than 75,000 families find the crucial support that they need and richly deserve. *Quest* readers may recall the hugely successful Liz Smith-championed block parties, known as Fête de Swifty, whose generous donations helped to construct and operate Family Justice Centers throughout the boroughs of New York.

Over the past year, the Family Justice Center Initiative has introduced and increased new programs to assist victims. In January 2011, the centers expanded their immigration services for domestic violence victims, providing additional attorneys to help clients find ways to obtain jobs, independent of their abuser—a key first step on their road to full recovery.

Last spring, the Family Justice Center in Queens launched a pilot program for entry-level jobs in the technology field. NYC STEPS (New York City Supported Training and



Opposite page: Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez awarding a certificate of completion to a member of the NYC STEPS program, Marsha Anderson. This page, clockwise: The cheerful decor of the Family Justice Centers, which offer free child care; the centers are designed to facilitate counseling; learning centers help kids adapt.

Employment Preparation Services) has created weekly classes in web-based instruction, with on-site support and remedial help from volunteers and FJC employees. This program has recently expanded to the FJC in the Bronx, and will open in the Brooklyn Center next month.

Not coincidentally, October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and the Mayor's Office will be proactively assisting on various events throughout our city—to elevate awareness, and empower New Yorkers who are, or may know of, domestic violence victims. These October events aim to bring community organizations together in an effort to better assist those living in abusive relationships. This is a highly worthy cause, and your grateful publisher encourages you to get involved during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and to contribute to the Mayor's Fund at www.nyc.gov/fund. ♦

