JRP created the SchoolWorks program in 2002 to remedy the numerous challenges that foster children and youth in the juvenile justice system face in our public school systems. Since then, JRP has served over 2,000 students. SchoolWorks is supported primarily through private contributions and grants. SchoolWorks also receives support from the Portland Children’s Levy.

SchoolWorks first confronted the particular challenges that schools and students face during a recession in 2003. The students served by SchoolWorks are some of the most likely to fall through the cracks. When school budgets are slashed, those cracks grow wider and wider.

SchoolWorks tackles a number of issues that continue to torment these most vulnerable students. For every 100 students SchoolWorks serves, 18 are not in school when services commence. There are a number of reasons for this. Foster children continue to move from one foster placement to another, and their caregivers run into barriers in enrolling these children in a timely manner. (See Owen’s story on page 3, as one example.) Students who have missed school due to absences or discipline also run into barriers to re-enrollment.

Nearly half of SchoolWorks students have disabilities or other special needs that require special attention from schools. Most students that come to the attention of SchoolWorks have behavioral and academic problems.

This summer we are highlighting the critical work done by our SchoolWorks program staff as they take a moment to reflect on the school year just ended and look forward to new challenges and new successes in the fall.

A Sample of 2009—2010 Successes

MAY — 7th Grade

May will be starting the 8th grade in the fall. She spent two years in foster care after being abused by her parents. Her parents are immigrants from Asia who did not understand May’s autism or know how to respond to her disability. They speak very little English. May’s school had not done a good job involving her parents, as it had never provided an interpreter for them at May’s special education meetings, which is required by federal law. May was referred to SchoolWorks because of her behav-

Continued on p. 3 (Note, client names have been changed to protect their privacy.)
Fifty-nine honorary committee members have joined co-chairs Kate Brown and Gerry Frank to spread the word about the Great Oregon Wine and Chocolate Smackdown. This year, JRP’s Champions for Children Gala will highlight Oregon’s Bounty at The Nines hotel on October 30th. The event will support JRP’s SchoolWorks program and advocacy for children and youth.

Honorary Committee members met at the Atwater Place penthouse on June 23rd and enjoyed the sustainable delights of Artemis foods and Salmon-Safe wines from Walla Walla.

The 2010 Honorary Committee Members are:


Tickets to the Gala can be purchased on-line by visiting www.jrplaw.org
ioral problems at school. The SchoolWorks attorney found out as she started investigating that the school district was falling down on many of its obligations. Her teacher reported "adequate progress" for May in math, yet the school had failed to provide her math instruction for five months. The school had also stopped using the services of an autism specialist, even though autism was May’s primary disability. The SchoolWorks attorney was able to negotiate compensatory education, including 33 hours of individual tutoring, for May and to obtain a full re-evaluation by the district of May’s educational needs. As a result, May’s behavior improved and she was able to spend more of her day in mainstream classes. The attorney also negotiated for May to remain at the same school through the 8th grade to minimize any additional problems. Normally, May would have to return to her neighborhood school when she transitioned out of the special classroom, but the district was convinced that such a transition could be harmful to her. Since the district began providing an interpreter at school meetings, May’s parents have developed a greater understanding of her disability through this process. May has returned home to her parent’s care.

OWEN — 5th grade

Owen suffered abuse in the home where he had been placed for adoption. When he was removed by DHS and placed once again in foster care, his foster parent could not get him registered in school. The first attempt to register him was in October. The school principal received the completed registration form to enroll Owen, yet took no action to admit Owen to his school. A month later, in response to pressure from Owen’s SchoolWorks attorney, the school district convened a meeting to discuss where Owen might go to school. Another month went by before a meeting occurred at the school where Owen would be attending, but this was right before the holiday break. Owen was finally able to attend school in January, nearly three months after his foster parent first attempted to enroll him in the local public school. Without SchoolWorks help, Owen might have been out of school even longer. In addition, SchoolWorks held the district accountable for the education it had denied Owen during the months that he and his foster family waited. Ultimately, the district agreed to provide compensatory education during the summer to help Owen recoup what he had missed in the fall. Owen is now receiving the academic instruction and social opportunities that he was denied early in the school year.

RALPH — 5th Grade

Ralph is in foster care and in the process of being adopted, but his adoptive mother had been struggling to get his school to provide an appropriate education for him. Ralph has a history of many behavior problems, and his school had relegated him to spending his days in a small room, removed from other classmates. He saw his teacher for only brief instances each day. Most of the day, he had an aide watching over him. For Ralph, this was a recipe for failure. He became easily frustrated. The school was also physically restraining Ralph unnecessarily and in ways that violated state policies, adding to Ralph’s toxic experience at school. This pattern repeated over a period of months. SchoolWorks became involved and demanded that the school come up with a better plan for Ralph. The district agreed to obtain training for its staff in Collaborative Problem Solving. Ralph’s SchoolWorks attorney also persuaded the school to use physical restraints only in instances where Ralph’s behavior might pose a risk to his safety or the safety of others and to implement a behavior plan that focuses on positive interactions and incentives. After the plan was implemented, the use of physical interventions with Ralph dropped by 93%. His attorney also convinced the school to allow Ralph to spend part of the day in a special education classroom with other students. While the school staff feared that this would have disastrous results, instead Ralph thrived in his new class. By the end of the school year, Ralph was successfully attending classes with other students and the school plans to continue to transition Ralph to more mainstream classes in the fall.

Would you like to support JRP’s programs by volunteering at the 2010 Gala?

Just call our development office 503-232-2540, ext. 231, or e-mail JaneenO@jrplaw.org.
“JRP has been Oregon’s conscience when it comes to the care of our foster children. They have been determined and effective in their advocacy to give children in foster care the kinds of lives we would all want for our children.”

--Hon. Kate Brown, Oregon Secretary of State