

## AISD and Seedling Foundation Shine Light on Children of the Incarcerated

August 15, 2007 - The Austin School District and the Seedling Foundation (formerly the Travis Community Education Foundation) are collaborating to raise awareness in the Austin community about issues facing children of incarcerated parents. The Seedling Foundation is hosting a reception for mentors and principals to hear Nell Bernstein, author of *All Alone in the World, Children of the Incarcerated*. The reception will be at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 21, at the Headliner's Club, 221. W. 6th Street. The reception will precede a day of training sponsored by the district's Department of Guidance and Counseling to help school counselors better understand the issues facing children of the incarcerated and to prepare elementary school counselors to facilitate support groups for these children on their individual campuses.

"This training is an opportunity for our counselors to learn how to assist these students who face a variety of issues as a result of their parents being incarcerated," said Charlotte Winkelmann, Assistant Director of Student Support Services for AISD.

The training, which will feature author Bernstein, Dee Ann Newell, whose work is to develop local, regional, or state strategies that will further the much-needed, larger national advocacy effort on behalf of children of incarcerated parents, and Ann Adalist-Estrin of the Child Welfare League of America. The three experts will address the training needs of more than 200 mentors, AISD counselors, parent support specialists and counselors from agencies that work with school students. Winkelmann said this is the first time that the agencies have worked with the school district on this issue. Look below for more information on these outstanding speakers.

In addition to the training, a panel discussion will be held at the Wednesday training session that will include representatives from the Travis County Sheriff's Office, Child Protective Services, the Victim Services Division of the Austin Police Department, the Austin School District and a caregiver of children whose father is incarcerated. Sari Waxler, Executive Director of the Seedling Foundation, said the reception and training create an opportunity to begin a dialogue about a problem in our community that has been in the shadows for too long. The Seedling Foundation has created Seedling's Promise, a mentoring program that creates healthy relationships between children of incarcerated parents and caring adults in the Austin community.

"People who work with the children of incarcerated parents will tell you that these children do time while their parents do time because of the shame and stigma attached," she said.

Waxler said that conservative estimates based on the number of incarcerated adults in Travis County suggest that there may be as many as 2,000 children in the Austin School District who have a parent in the correctional system.

(On site media contact for the Headliner's Club reception is Sari Waxler at 323-6371. Principals and mentors as well as Ms. Bernstein, Ms. Newell, and Ms. Adalist-Estrin will be available for interviews.)

**SEEDLING FOUNDATION THANKS THE AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY RE-ENTRY ROUNDTABLE FOR THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THIS EVENT.**

Our Speakers:

**Nell Bernstein**

Nell Bernstein is the author of *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated*. She is also the editor of *Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Bill of Rights*, and the coordinator of the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership.

Nell's interest in children began while she was in college. She worked in a shelter for runaway and homeless teens. Later she spent a year as a counselor at a group home for hard-to-place foster youth. Those early experiences led to a lifelong interest in listening to and attempting to present to a wider audience the voices of young people living on the margins.

Ms. Bernstein's writings have appeared in many national publications. Her book *All Alone in the World*, won the PASS Award from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, was selected as "Pick of the Week" by Newsweek Magazine, a best book of the year by the San Francisco Chronicle, and a top ten book of the year by the Online Review of Books.

Bernstein has also worked as a consultant to the California Research Bureau, conducting interviews with children of incarcerated parents, exploring the mental health needs of young people in and exiting the foster care and juvenile justice systems, and producing and moderating monthly youth panels at the legislature. She currently coordinates the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership.

**Ann Adalist-Estrin**

Ann is a nationally known and respected expert on children and families of prisoners. She currently serves as director of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated for the Family Corrections Network. She is also a Senior Fellow of the Child Welfare League of America, and consultant for hundreds of mentoring children of prisoners programs across the country. Ann has been a child and family therapist for more than twenty-five years, currently practicing at BRIDGES/Samaritan Counseling centers in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. Ann is an author, speaker, and consultant to a variety of agencies serving children and families and is widely published in the field of mentoring.

#### Dee Ann Newell

Dee Ann is a Soros Justice Fellow in the Open Society Institute which supports outstanding individuals to implement innovative projects that address criminal justice priorities. Dee Ann was director of services for children of prisoners and their families and co-founded Arkansas Voices, which advocates for the rights and well-being of children with parents behind bars. She was the Project Director of one of the five Demonstration Sites for Children of Prisoners, federally funded by the Clinton administration. Her program model, Family Matters, was identified in the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's evaluation as the most promising model of services for children of prisoners. Dee Ann is with the national Children Bill of Rights (BOR) Project and is the national consultant who is working with several sites (including Austin) to help actualize the Children's Bill of Rights project in their localities.