Kids like Adam are counting on you
Attend the CCYJ breakfast on March 17 to create better systems, better lives

When his mother was too drunk or too high to make dinner for her four young children, Adam Cornell would prepare the only meal he knew how to cook – popcorn and eggs – for his little sister and brothers. He was only 5 years old.

Today, as a prosecuting attorney in Snohomish County, Adam is a champion for children and families. It’s why the Center for Children & Youth Justice will honor him on Tuesday, March 17, with the Norm Maleng Advocate for Youth Award.

“I lived in at least half a dozen foster homes. A few times, I’d go back to my mother, but then she’d relapse and I’d bounce back to foster care. It was double the trauma,” Adam recalls.

All four children were given up for adoption when Adam was 8 years old, the kids separated from each other among foster and adoptive families. Adam’s childhood was a dichotomy of love and support, disappointment and tragedy.

If the reforms now being championed by CCYJ had been in place when he was a child, Adam feels he could have been spared much of his emotional turmoil.

“What’s so magical about what CCYJ is doing is the collaboration – marshalling the troops from government and nonprofits and the courts and business. We all have to be invested together to make our communities safer and healthier.”

Adam will share his remarkable story with guests at CCYJ’s signature fundraising event of the year.

“As a criminal prosecutor, I can’t think of an award I’d rather receive,” says Adam. “Norm’s ethics, his laser focus on doing justice for everyone, is something that every prosecutor should try to emulate. He was absolutely the gold standard of the servant leader.”
Dear friends and supporters,

A 16-year-old girl, bouncing between the streets and foster care, longing for stability and love but finding only risk and heartache. Let’s call her Amy.

Amy’s home life was already rocked by domestic violence when she told her parents she was gay. That’s when her stepdad turned his anger on her. CPS stepped in, but unknowingly placed Amy with a foster family whose value system did not accept her sexual orientation. They told her she was wicked and doomed.

When Amy ran away, a pimp offered her shelter and forced her to steal. She wound up in juvenile detention, where a caring probation counselor wanted to help her but was ill-trained to deal with the emotional trauma and prejudice Amy had suffered because of her sexual orientation. Released from detention, Amy returned to the streets. She remains homeless today.

“Amy” isn’t a real young woman, but her story is all too true for many system kids today – re-victimized by well-meaning systems that cannot adequately meet the needs of all children and youth.

Ensuring that well-researched, effective, equitable policies are in place to care for vulnerable children is what system reform is all about. It’s why your investment in CCYJ can ensure that children and youth across our state have an equal opportunity to be safe and successful.

On behalf of every Amy in the system today and tomorrow, thank you.

Yours very truly,

Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.)
CCYJ Founding President/CEO

Your gifts fuel justice for LGBTQ youth

CCYJ will hold several events this year to engage policy-makers, stakeholders and donors in examining system-wide changes that can keep LGBTQ youth safe and better address their unique challenges and needs.

Supported by generous donors like you, CCYJ’s eQuality is aimed at ensuring that LGBTQ youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have laws, policies and practices that will eliminate and prevent trauma and victimization.

After nearly two years of extensive research that included conducting focus groups of lesbian, gay, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth throughout Washington, CCYJ will unveil its findings at these events.

Launched in 2013, eQuality is a groundbreaking project, the most comprehensive data collection, law and policy review, and information gathering effort ever undertaken in Washington focused on LGBTQ youth with experience in the juvenile justice and/or foster care systems.

A report from the events will be distributed this spring.

For more information about how your support can change the world for system-involved LGBTQ youth – or for information on how to donate to support other CCYJ initiatives – contact Rosemary Coleman at 206.696.7503, ext. 13, or rcoleman@ccyj.org
‘No one could promise I could keep my kids safe’

System’s inadequacies spur CCYJ donor to action

Of course, there were warning signs. The flares of temper. The constant criticism. The isolation from her friends and family.

But Kristen Howell was young. She was in love. A child of divorce whose parents moved often around the country, she’d always longed for a family of her own.

“I could tell before the wedding that it was a bad idea,” she remembers. “But the thought of calling it off felt like being completely alone in the world.”

And then, after years of physical and emotional abuse, he choked her in front of their daughter. Kristen knew she had to leave. But with a baby and a preschooler – and despite her legal expertise as an attorney – she found roadblocks everywhere she turned.

“I was navigating this crazy system and all I wanted to do was take care of my kids,” she says. “Through court proceedings and CPS investigations and trials and restraining orders, no one could promise I could keep my kids safe.”

Exhausted and outraged, Kristen “decided to channel my anger into something more positive.”

Today, the “something more positive” is CCYJ.

“CCYJ is changing the whole system to help all families, not just a few people at a time,” she explains. “There are amazing advocates and organizations dedicated to helping families and children, but they can only help a small number at a time within the confines of the system. CCYJ is changing an arbitrary and uninformed system into one that really works.”

A dedicated donor and chair of CCYJ’s board of directors – now happily remarried – Kristen believes everyone has a stake in the Center’s work.

“You invest in CCYJ if you care about families, children and our community,” she emphasizes. “CCYJ researches the most promising reforms and then has the expertise and reputation to mobilize key stakeholders to make lasting change happen. No one else is doing this work.”

Gang Council reaches out to protect kids and communities

With as many as 5,000 kids and young adults involved in gangs – 1 in every 25 students in the Auburn, Bellevue, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton and Tukwila school districts – we all benefit when gang members or “wannabes” can find safer, more positive paths in life.

CCYJ’s Suburban King County Coordinating Council on Gangs – comprised of decision-makers from schools, city government, law enforcement, the juvenile justice system and more – is now coordinating the first outreach teams deployed to intervene with gang-involved youth. The teams will connect youth with the services and guidance they need – drug and alcohol treatment, mental health and anger management counseling, job training and placement, education services including GED tutoring, mentoring and more.

“We want to increase the availability of these kinds of services and make them better coordinated, more effective and more efficient,” CCYJ’s Justice Bridge explains. “Kids join gangs because they lack strong and meaningful support systems. Our goal is to replace gangs with wrap around services and people who care.”

With increased support from people like you, the Council will expand its work to serve more kids and to pioneer new solutions to keep kids and communities safe.
The Center for Children & Youth Justice is creating a promising new future for kids in foster care and the youth justice system. But we’re not just making their lives better. We’re working to change systems that are inherently unfair and biased. Our vision is to advance justice through integrated, unbiased decision making, using evidence-based practices, utilizing evidence-based systems staffed by highly-skilled practitioners, using integrated, unbiased, decision-making systems that are effective and efficient. The Center’s mission is to advance justice through integrated, unbiased decision-making systems that are effective and efficient. The Center’s mission is to advance justice through integrated, unbiased decision-making systems that are effective and efficient.