

CBA Long Time Supporter of *Invisible Kids*

“Do I still get to be with Sarah?”

– Adam, 5, when his caseworker came to take him and his little sister to a new foster home.

By Holly Schlaack



Foster children like Adam and Sarah are largely invisible in our community. These children are abused and neglected so severely that they are removed from their parents and enter the world of foster care that sometimes meets their needs for safety, stability and love. Sometimes,

Although many foster parents are devoted and loving to the foster children placed in their homes, some are not. Our community saw firsthand how miserably the foster care system can fail as we watched the tragic story of murdered foster child Marcus Fiesel unfold. In *Invisible Kids: Marcus Fiesel’s Legacy*, I share the story of Marcus and many other foster children.

Invisible Kids educates readers about the crises facing foster children and empowers them to become a part of the solution to the problems they face.

Since 1981, the Cincinnati Bar Association has been a strong supporter of ProKids, helping kids just like Adam and Sarah. A commitment to abused and neglected children in Hamilton County led the CBA to help found ProKids, a non-profit agency dedi-

cated to ensuring a safe, permanent and nurturing home for every child. ProKids recruits, trains and supervises community volunteers known as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). Along with a ProKids attorney and Guardian Ad Litem, a CASA is appointed to represent the best interests of a child in juvenile court proceedings.

Nationally, children are more likely to be abused and neglected in foster care than children in the general population¹. Abuse stopped for 98 percent of ProKids children in 2008.

The CBA’s commitment to ProKids and our Greater Cincinnati’s invisible children continues today. Each year the CBA organizes the annual Run For Kids (see page 23) with proceeds allowing ProKids to continue

its mission. Additionally, CBA attorneys participate in the Holiday Giving Basket for ProKids’ foster children, making the season brighter for them.


Abused and neglected children are in crisis, as is the foster care system

designed to meet their needs. The vulnerabilities of these children are increasing at a time when services to meet their

needs are shrinking due to budget constraints. Cases flooding Juvenile Court are heinous; they demand dedi-

cated foster parents, skilled clinicians and impeccable court advocacy if a child has any hope of recovery. An estimated 35 percent of Hamilton County’s foster children are placed outside of the county due to a critical shortage of foster homes. Our invisible kids’ best hope lies in the community around them.

Join the CBA in its efforts to help our community’s most vulnerable children. To learn more, please visit www.prokids.org or contact Jennifer McKettrick at (513) 487-6445.

You can also follow the story of Adam and Sarah in *Invisible Kids: Marcus Fiesel’s Legacy* (Advocacy Publishing, 2009), at www.hollyschlaack.com or at Joseph Beth Booksellers. 

Schlaack is a Guardian Ad Litem and has extensive experience supervising CASAs. She also is the developer of a program that provides specialized advocacy for abused and neglected infants and toddlers and is the co-founder of the Ohio Association for Infant Mental Health.

¹ Maier, Timothy W. (1997). *Suffer the Children*. National Foster Care Education Project. Insight on the News.

