



# Update . . .

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## Chairman's Report *by Richard D. Weisskopf*

When Bryan Samuels took office as director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) in 2003, The State of Illinois had one of the worst child welfare systems in the United States. Ranking 48 of 50 states - IDCFS was on the verge of bankruptcy.

During his first weeks in office, Samuels and I had a series of meetings along with his future replacement, Erwin McEwen. The three of us had as our goal to fill in Illinois' continuum of child welfare services and maximize community-based programs. As a result of implementing our strategy, the State of Illinois jumped from 48 out of 50 states - to number one in the nation according to the latest 2007 U.S.

Department of Health & Human Services report.

I moved to Jerusalem soon afterwards and discovered Israel has 9,800 children in state custody according to the National Council for the Child. This is slightly high relative to Israel's population. Of those, 6,500 are in institutional care. That is more than six times the acceptable maximum percentage. Anything over 20% indicates a need for change. At 66%, Israel faces a youth crisis that heavily burdens Israeli taxpayers and society.

The Love for Israel Relief Fund made it a priority to adapt universal principles from past successes to Israeli society. In 2007 we expanded our network with strategic allies while continuing our ongoing projects. While

details are available on the Updates Page of our web site ([www.love4israel.org](http://www.love4israel.org)), I will hit a few highlights.

We opened regular communication with over 100 Knesset Members, a number of whom take the youth crisis seriously. We strengthened our relationship with the IDF's official outreach effectively keeping track of "orphan" soldiers within the larger group of "lone" soldiers. In the community, we opened relations with municipalities, hospitals, schools, shelters and social service agencies all over the country who deal with the youth crisis every day. Most recently, we formed an alliance with a grassroots organization of single mothers - the only one of its kind in Israel. These women are among the strongest advocates for at-risk children.

The Love for Israel Relief Fund will continue in 2008 a trend of measuring success by the number of lives we impact. By the end of the year we intend to organize at least 30,000 Israeli voters committed to speak up for our children. Our 2008 plan includes helping support community based-programs for over 25,000 at-risk children. One example is a junior diplomats project where we send at-risk youth abroad to represent our nation at summer camp. Other projects include art therapy and soccer leagues for at-risk kids.

Our two biggest challenges for 2008 are

helping hospitalized children and children in state custody. The hardest thing for a needy family is to lose a child - whether temporarily or permanently. Our plan is to continue supporting programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children - including those living in hard-to-reach areas. We also plan to partner with more Israeli leaders committed to legislate for the most vulnerable children among us.

As chairman, I am excited about our path in 2008. We stand at a crossroads where we can significantly improve the inheritance we pass to our children. To our international friends and supporters; to our national and community leaders; to everyone who loves Israel - I want to thank you for all you have done to support and encourage Israelis in need. Let us stand together in support of these children - our future. Together, I am certain we can apply proven universal strategies and programs to give our children the best hope for tomorrow.

**About Our Chairman** - available online at:  
<http://www.love4israel.org/chairman1.html>

**You can donate online at:**  
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