

Advocacy 2011 in DC

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Mayor Gray proclaimed February 2011 “Parent Leadership Month” in Washington, DC. In recognition of the month, the Parents Anonymous® Program of the DC Children’s Trust Fund sponsored a number of events including the Parents Anonymous® National Parent Leadership Institute, recognizing six Parent Leaders, and sponsoring Advocacy Day.

Thursday, February 24th was designated Advocacy Day. The event, took place at the John Wilson Building (City Hall). It was a fun-filled day that included a “meet & greet” with award recipients, elected officials and/or their staff, and parent advocates, an announcement about the National Parent Helpline® launch, an awards presentation ceremony and visits with selected officials. Council members Michael Brown, Harry Thomas, and Sekou Biddle gave greetings. Adam Meir of Mayor Gray’s Office also welcomed the group.

Leadership awards were presented to six parents:

- Rita Harris of Ward 2
- Bridget Kenner of Ward 4,
- Natalie Booker of Ward 5,
- Barbara Dorman of Ward 6,
- Jenaine Butler of Ward 7, and
- Portia Banks of Ward 8.

Following the awards ceremony, parents received a briefing and were trained on how to inform their elected officials of the vital need for Parents Anonymous® Programs and the National Parent Helpline®. They received manuals on effective advocacy techniques and talked about how to tell their stories with impact. After visitation assignments were discussed, each group was given an informational packet and promotional items to present to their officials. Parents were very excited about the opportunity. They encouraged each other to “step up and tell their stories” and to discuss how looming budget cuts should not be made on the backs of their community. After the visits, parents were eager to share their experiences. One new parent said she did not know that she was going to speak, but she did and she felt good about it. She relayed that she talked about how she came to Parents Anonymous® of Metro DC. She also talked about a coat drive event sponsored by the DC Children’s Trust Fund and the Children Charities Foundation that she attended where over 1,000 new coats with matching hats and mittens were given away. Each of her three children received a set. She stated that she was very grateful for the gifts because now her children did not have to take turns going to school because each of them did not a warm coat. The groups visited every Council office and we ended our day with a short tour of the Wilson Building (City Hall) because a number of parents were visiting the inside of the building for the first time. It was truly an exciting day for all.