Hundreds of students eagerly listened as Governor Malloy spoke to them about civil rights, fairness and equality at Kids’ Speak

The 2011 Connecticut Kids’ Court Competition was kicked off this year when hundreds of students, teachers, sponsors and administrators converged on the State Capitol for Kids’ Speak on April 26th. The day was filled with interactive exercises, improvisations, discussion and peer dialogue on topics that range from hate crimes in America’s schools to health care disparity and education. Students from fourteen schools across the state heard the words of Governor Malloy; Attorney General George Jepsen; Comptroller Kevin Lembo; Deputy Treasurer Jonathan Harris, and other prominent speakers. Monique McClain, a student who had been bullied in Middletown, courageously spoke out about her experience standing up to bullying. Panel members included Regina Hopkins, DOE; Bill Howe, DOE; Alfreda Turner, President and CEO, Charter Oak Caleb Lopez SRO South Windsor Police, Glen Cassis, AAAC, and Human Rights Attorneys Cheryl A. Sharp and Michelle Dumas Keuler. Group facilitators included: Referees Thomas Austin and Donna Marie Wilkerson-Brilliant; Human Rights Attorneys Kimberly Jacobson; Robin Kinsler Fox; Alix Simonetti; Principal Attorney Charles Krich; Regional Manager Tanya Hughes; Lucy Hernandez from Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs, and Frances Sharp. A special thanks goes out to Charles Perry and student volunteers from Trinity College, UCONN Law School & Manchester Community college!

The Kids’ Court Essay Competition will be held on May 24, 2011. CHRO staff is currently reviewing the students’ submissions in order to determine the finalists. The CHRO is co-sponsoring the competition with Jack & Jill, Inc., LPRAC, APAAC, Charter Oak Health Center, the CT Department of Education, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. The finalists will orally present their essays that evening to a panel of prominent judges. Student will win various prizes including Governor Citations and savings bonds.

Fair Housing Month kicked off on April 6th when the CHRO sponsored a Fair Housing Seminar at the Capitol entitled “Can I Live Here.” Members of the public and housing providers enjoyed a panel discussion which included presentations from Nndi Moses, DOJ; Michelle Johnson, HUD; Human Rights Referee Thomas Austin and State Representative Butler. This event, organized by the Legal Department and Housing unit was a resounding success. Fair housing month activities continued as Human Rights Attorney Robert Zamowski participated in an interactive panel discussion at an all day training seminar for Housing Authority professionals on April 27, 2011. Approximately 100 people were in attendance to hear the panel discuss the topic of reasonable accommodations in housing for persons with disabilities. On May 5, 2011 Human Rights Attorneys Robert Zamowski and Michelle Dumas Keuler moderated another Panel discussion entitled “Reasonable accommodation – Emerging Issues and Creative Solutions” and led an interactive group exercise following the panel discussion at the Thirty-Second annual Fair Housing Conference sponsored by the Fair Housing Association of Connecticut. CHRO Investigator/mediator Dori Bruce was on the Panel that also included a HUD representative, a disability rights attorney and two Public Housing officials.

Stand Against Racism

On April 29th staff members from the Capitol, Southwest, Eastern and West Central regional offices participated in the “Stand against Racism” program sponsored by the YWCA. The staff wore “racism hurts” stickers & gave members of the public information about the CHRO’S complaint process. Thanks for taking a stand!

Transgender Lives Conference

On April 30th human Rights Attorneys Cheryl Sharp and Alix Simonetti spoke at the Transgender Lives Conference at the UCONN Health Center. The conference was held to raise awareness of legal and health issues that affect the lives of Transgender individuals. Attorneys Sharp and Simonetti spoke about filing CHRO claims and the work-share agreement with HUD, EEOC & CHRO.

Contract Compliance

The Contract Compliance/ Affirmative Action Unit, on a weekly basis, provides Technical Assistance to state agencies & contractors doing business with state. The one-on-one TA’s are provided to help facilitate agency and contractor compliance with state affirmative action and contract compliance laws.