

RC team attends October Commission on Children's Justice presentations

Special to Pelahatchie News

The Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice attended presentations by Chan Hellman, Ph.D. on October 20, 21 and 22 in Jackson at the Gartin Justice Building and the Department of Child Protection Services. Katrina Phillips represented Rankin County Youth Court at the presentations.

Dr. Hellman, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a professor of social work at the University of Oklahoma and Director of The Hope Research Center. His research is focused on hope as a psychological strength helping children and adults overcome trauma and adversity. He is the co-author of the book *Hope Rising: How the Science of Hope Can Change Your Life*.

"Our overall goal is to create a culture of hope that is grounded in evidence-based practices," Hellman told the co-chairs of the Commission on Children's Justice and the HOPE training development committee in a virtual meeting on October 8.

"When you expose people to the awareness of trauma and adversity, the question is what do we do about it. The answer is hope," Hellman said. "Individuals who are in crisis, who have a history of trauma, tend to set goals of avoidance. Higher hope individuals

set achievement goals."

Commission on Children's Justice Co-Chair Justice Dawn Beam said, "We are excited to welcome *Hope Rising* author Dr. Hellman to Mississippi. He will challenge all of us to think outside the box on how to help struggling families in our state. My prayer is that he helps all of us to see hope: hope for our state leaders to see a way to improve services to our families, hope to service providers that have been workers in the trenches for years, but especially hope to our families and children to see their way out of poverty, helplessness and despair."

Taylor Cheeseman, Interim Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, said, "Ensuring child and family wellbeing is the ultimate goal for all who serve in Mississippi's child welfare system. And I believe Dr. Hellman's research and training on hope will be an effective tool for fostering the resilience families who have experienced significant trauma need to move towards a state of



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Speaker Dr. Chan Hellman, author of *Hope Rising*, is shown with Katrina Phillips, Deputy Court Administrator of the Rankin County Youth Court.

long-term wellbeing."

The Commission on Children's Justice recently established Programs of HOPE to continue to address child neglect prevention. Five multi-disciplinary committees were established to identify and recommend actions which can fill gaps, strengthen opportunities and lift up Mississippi families to a place where they can see a path toward better lives.

Programs of HOPE committees include Housing and Transportation; Opportunities for Treatment; Parent, Child and Family Supports; Economic Security; and Pathways of HOPE.

The Mississippi Supreme Court created the Commission on Children's Justice in 2006 and tasked it to develop a statewide, comprehensive approach to improving the child welfare system; coordinate the three branches of government; and recommend changes to improve children's safety, strengthen and support families, and promote public trust and confidence in the child welfare system.

Hope is more than a wish, and giving hope can make a difference in the lives of abused and neglected children and their families, says an Oklahoma psychologist who met with Mississippi officials.

Dr. Hellman is scheduled to present a series of hope-centered lectures to judges, court staff and Department of Child Protection Services social workers during three regional trainings on April 13, 14, and 15, 2021, in Oxford, Madison and Gulfport as part of the Court Improvement Program.

Providing hope is part of the work of those charged with ensuring the wellbeing of children and families. Hope is a pathway to helping people find employment and find solutions to problems, such as acquiring transportation to reach jobs or gain access to services. People need hope that there is a way out of their circumstances.



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