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FOREWORD: CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF JUVENILE COURT IN MINNESOTA

Justice Paul H. Anderson[†]

The celebration of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of juvenile court in Minnesota had its genesis in a January 8, 2004 letter from Gail Chang Bohr to then-Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz. Gail, who is Executive Director of the Children’s Law Center, wrote to the Chief Justice to suggest that we do something to appropriately note the centennial of juvenile court in Minnesota. Gail had just finished reading an ABA study entitled “Child Court Works” and was also familiar with an earlier celebration in the State of Illinois that marked the establishment of juvenile court in that state—the first juvenile court in the United States. Gail contacted the Chief Justice because she believed that it would be important that the Minnesota Supreme Court play a key role in any celebration.

After a few fits and starts, planning began in earnest in November 2004, due in large part to the diligent efforts of Gail Chang Bohr, State Court Administrator Sue Dosal, and State Law Librarian Barbara Golden. Early in 2005, the supreme court established a planning committee to organize the celebration. William Mitchell College of Law Dean Allen Easley became a member of the committee and Dean Easley subsequently invited Robert Schug, Executive Editor of the *William Mitchell Law Review*, to work with the committee. Their participation would prove crucial to the committee’s mission.

It was soon resolved that the centennial celebration would center around three main objectives.

1. A re-enactment of the oral arguments of the U.S. Supreme Court case of *In re Gault*, 387 U.S. 1 (1967). *Gault* was chosen for re-enactment because the Supreme Court’s May 15, 1967 decision established due process rights for juveniles and as a result had a direct impact on Minnesota’s juvenile justice system.

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2. Sponsorship of a symposium that would focus on juvenile justice. The plan was for the symposium to cover the past, present, and future of Minnesota's juvenile justice system. The symposium would celebrate what has been accomplished during the past 100 years, provide a realistic evaluation of where we are now, and formulate plans and recommendations for how the system can be better in the future.

3. The creation of a traveling exhibit consisting of a number of storyboards that would highlight key persons, events, and organizations in the history of Minnesota Juvenile Court. The exhibit's purpose would be to tell the story of juvenile court in a way that would speak to the public, especially children, be graphically pleasing, and have an impact across the state. The exhibit would be in a format that was easily transportable to courthouses, libraries, and schools, and would also be available for use through the Internet.

The re-enactment of *In re Gault* took place on May 13, 2005 in the supreme court courtroom at the Minnesota Judicial Center. Justices of the Minnesota Supreme Court played the roles of the U.S. Supreme Court Justices, State Public Defender John Stuart played the role of Gault's counsel, and James Reece played the role of Arizona's Assistant Attorney General. Following the re-enactment, University of Minnesota Law School Professor Barry C. Feld spoke on the impact and legacy of *In re Gault* in Minnesota, which led to a lively discussion. The re-enactment proved to be an excellent kick-off for the celebration.

The next order of business was to plan for the symposium, which took place on November 4, 2005. Here, we were very fortunate to obtain the services and cooperation of many leading professionals involved in juvenile justice issues. Topics for discussion ranged from brain development and mental health issues to dealing with sexual abuse and sex offenses, confidentiality, the changing roles of judges and advocates, and innovative programs dealing with juvenile justice issues outside of the traditional court setting. More than 200 persons attended the symposium.

Fortunately for the centennial celebration, the involvement of Dean Easley and Robert Schug on the planning committee has led to the symposium's content being made available to a broader audience through the publication of this edition of the *William*

Mitchell Law Review. It is the committee's hope that the publication of the content of the symposium and the guiding principles the committee has formulated as a direct result will prove useful to others who are working to make the juvenile justice system better.

At the time of publication, we are in the process of finishing the third and final objective on our agenda—the traveling exhibit consisting of storyboards that tell the history of juvenile justice in Minnesota. Our goal is to have the materials completed by mid-2006 so that the exhibit can be part of local celebrations, programs, and school activities. The materials will also be available on the website of the Minnesota Judicial Branch—www.courts.state.mn.us—so that schools will have ready access to their content.

I believe that I speak for everyone who has played a role in putting together the parts of this centennial celebration when I say that it has been an interesting, educational, and fun endeavor. We know that courts for children do work—history has shown this to be true. But we have also learned that the system can work much better to serve the interests and needs of children in the twenty-first century. We hope that our review of the past, evaluation of the present, and look to the future will become part of a larger process that will be dedicated to making the juvenile justice system work better for everyone.