

**Welcome Remarks**  
**Reception Honoring Bob Simmons**  
**Executive Director, Council for Children's Rights**  
**The Duke Endowment – June 3, 2015**



Good evening.

First, I want to give thanks to some folks:

- To Ed O'Keefe and to the rest of the Council Board for the opportunity to serve our community's children. It is an honor and a privilege.
- To my wife Jen for enthusiastically encouraging me to accept the opportunity.
- To my former colleagues at McGuireWoods for supporting my pro bono and volunteer service and for helping expedite my move to accommodate the Council's schedule.
- To the Council staff for welcoming me with open arms, but especially to Robert McCarter, who came out of retirement when the Council needed a Managing Attorney and then stepped up to serve as Interim Executive Director. He has helped me make the transition.
- To all of you for your support and to the Duke Endowment for letting us use their wonderful facility.

Second, I want to tell you my job for tonight.

My job tonight is to thank you for your support, to share with you my vision for the Council and to ask you to join me in imagining the possibilities for our community's children if we work together to assure that all of them grow up safe, healthy and educated.

While I am the Council's new Executive Director, I am not new to the Council – or to most of you. For those of you already in the choir who don't need more preaching from me, feel free to put the next few minutes to better use by going online with your mobile devices to [www.cfcrights.org](http://www.cfcrights.org), click "Donate Now," and make a generous contribution. We are having a special on donations with commas.

(I know I have just given everybody cover to check their emails, but I trust you.)

For those of you still listening, when I am asked for my vision for the Council, it makes me uncomfortable for two reasons.

*imagine the possibilities...*



***1. People expect a vision to be grand, not simple.***

This is my simple vision of the Council:

The Council speaks up for children who have no other voice. The Council stands up for children who have no other champion. The Council protects children when there is no other adult who can or will – or when the adults who should be protecting them are placing them in peril. Then we take what we have learned from the children we serve and we go upstream to identify the gaps in our community's structure that allow children to fall into peril, and we work with our public and private partners to close those gaps.

This is what the Council has always done. This is what the Council will always do.

***2. This simple vision of the Council is a shared community vision, not a personal vision.***

This vision existed in our community before I began to work as a volunteer lawyer with the Children's Law Center in 1987.

It was the vision of Dolly Tate when the Council for Children was founded in 1979. It was the vision of Bill Jones when the Children's Law Center was founded in 1987. It was the vision of Larry King and Katie Holiday when they led the Council and the Law Center. It is the vision of everybody who has worked at the Council or served on the Board in the past 36 years.

I am humbled by the chance to serve this vision, to spread the word, to increase support, and to help more children.

I hope it is the vision that most of you also share.

All of us at the Council – Board and staff – hope that you can imagine with us the possibilities for our community's children if we can realize our vision for all of them.

Thank you.



*imagine the possibilities...*