

SOCIETY *Scene*

On the Scene

Florida's Children First hosts eighth annual 'Broward Awards and Reception'

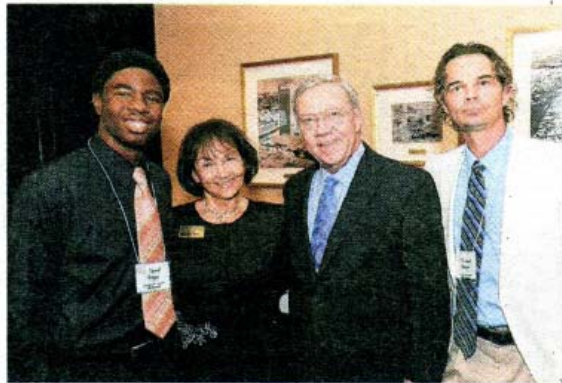
Florida's Children First (FCF), a child advocacy organization, staged its eighth annual "Broward Awards and Reception" event on Feb. 24. More than 200 child advocates, elected officials, judges, and community and business leaders gathered at the Tower Club in downtown Fort Lauderdale to recognize former Secretary of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) George Sheldon and other special honorees for their advocacy and contributions for protecting Florida's youth.

"Having personally worked one-on-one with these individuals, it was such an honor to be able to recognize these amazing people for their tireless work on behalf of Florida's abused, abandoned and neglected children and youth," said FCF Executive Director Christina Spudeas. "FCF is truly grateful for their support, in addition to the many wonderful sponsors who make these events possible."

Sheldon received the evening's Children's Advocate Award for having been an advocate for youths aging out of foster care and working to improve the agency.

The Junior League of Fort Lauderdale was honored for its work with aging-out foster youths and efforts to establish and fund the FLITE (Fort Lauderdale Independence Training & Education) Center. Other honorees included Walter Honaman, who received the Tracey McPharlin Award for his quiet, lifelong advocacy for children in the system; the Gagne Family as this year's Broward Foster/Adoptive Family; and Christopher J. Bahamundi as the Foster Youth Advocate.

Florida's Children First is a statewide child advocacy program, serving as a watchdog



David Gagne, left, Christina Spudeas, George Sheldon, and Michael Gagne



Steven Osber, left, Cristian LaCapra, Angelo Filippi, and Heath Eskalyo



Walter Honaman, left, and Howard Talenfeld

agency, holding DCF and others accountable, and helping them do a better job at protecting the children who need their services.

A nonprofit organization, FCF seeks meaningful and

sustainable improvements in child-serving systems, with a special emphasis on the foster care system.

For more information, call 954-796-0860 or visit www.floridaschildrenfirst.org.