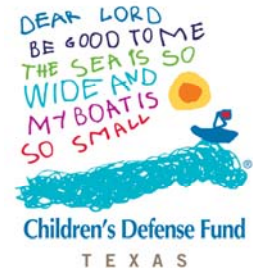




AMERICAN LEADERSHIP FORUM HOUSTON/GULF COAST CHAPTER



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Contact: Harriet Wasserstrum, American Leadership Forum, 713.807.1253
Anat Kelman Shaw, Children's Defense Fund, 713.664.4080

New Report Spotlights Promising Strategies to Dismantle the Pipeline to Prison in Houston

American Leadership Forum and hundreds of community leaders zero in on local solutions

Houston, TX,---Today, Class XXV of the American Leadership Forum (ALF) / Houston Gulf Coast Chapter hosted a breakfast briefing for business leaders and agency heads to unveil its new report *A Study of Solutions: Dismantling the Cradle to Prison Pipeline in Houston and Texas*. Four hundred leaders gathered at the Hilton Americas hotel downtown to hear and discuss community solutions. Senator Rodney Ellis, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, Sheriff Adrian Garcia, Rice University Professor Dr. Stephen Klineberg and Stephen Williams on behalf of Mayor Bill White joined members of ALF Class XXV: Donna Fujimoto Cole, Cole Chemical, Dr. John Burruss, Baylor College of Medicine, Robert Ivany, University of St. Thomas, Ronald Lewis, Marshall and Lewis LLP, and Gilda Ramirez of the Port of Houston Authority to present the findings of a year-long investigation.

The report spotlights the innovative strategies of twelve local groups working to create a more positive future for young people, effectively saving Houston taxpayers billions of dollars by avoiding the costs of incarceration. The stories of these organizations demonstrate that the Prison Pipeline can be dismantled through prevention and intervention and that with the proper investment we can safeguard the future of Houston.

"Eighty-eight percent of children in Harris County are African-American and Latino and they are the most at risk of falling into the pipeline," said Rice University professor Dr. Stephen Klineberg, and member of ALF Class X. ***"If we don't take action now and turn this trend around, our city will not make it,"*** added Klineberg.

The Children's Defense Fund reports that at the intersection of poverty and race, many factors channel large numbers of youths away from productive lives and toward prison. They include illiteracy, poverty, poor health care, domestic violence, mental health issues, teen pregnancy, unemployment, lack of positive role models, truancy and more. The Children's Defense Fund compares this phenomenon to a pipeline. The more risk factors young people have, the greater the likelihood they will enter the Pipeline. Once in it, kids are caught in a downward spiral that makes it almost impossible to get out.

“The epidemic of incarceration is disrupting communities and eroding our future workforce. Unless we focus on prevention, we are robbing thousands of youths each year of their futures and our country of vital human resources,” said Donna Fujimoto Cole, President and CEO of Cole Chemical and a member of ALF Class XXV.

“We must harvest our human capital; we have created a system of policies that is leading children from the cradle to the pipeline. We need to focus on this issue in order to be able to compete economically with countries much larger than ours,” said Ron Lewis, partner with Marshall & Lewis LLP and a member of ALF Class XXV.

To raise awareness, the Children’s Defense Fund has launched a nationwide call to action. American Leadership Forum Class XXV chose to concentrate on this issue and urges the Houston community to get involved.

To view the report, visit www.alfhouston.com and click on Publications.
To get involved, join the campaign at www.cdf-texas.org.

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About American Leadership Forum

Since 1981, the American Leadership Forum has offered a yearlong training program for established leaders from all sectors of our community. Single sector programs were added in healthcare in 2006, in public education in 2007, and in criminal justice in 2009. More than 650 Senior Fellows have now been trained in collaboration and consensus building as they work for a more effective, cohesive community for the Houston/Gulf Coast. www.alfhouston.com