

This year, the students in the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic are pioneering a project that will use storytelling to empower both current and former foster children. Inspired by NPR's "StoryCorps" segment, the class's project will give foster children an opportunity to voice their stories to an audience that wants to listen. Foster children routinely feel as though they have no voice. These feelings are justified, given that so much of their young lives are dictated by other people. This project, entitled "In Their Own Words," will create a "story booth" for these children—a place where they can tell their stories, and people will listen. This is a powerful concept for the children, who will presumably gain a therapeutic benefit from knowing someone cares about their past, and for the audience, who will hopefully feel inspired to take part in fixing our broken foster care system.

Diane M. Sumoski, Esq., the Clinic Supervising Attorney and Director of the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Institute for Children's Rights, will oversee the project, but the clinic students have creative latitude to structure and launch the project. The students are responsible for finding willing foster children and deciding how to record and publicize their stories. The group initiated their efforts in early September when they met with Carla Cleeton, assistant director of CitySquare. The clinic will collaborate with CitySquare to locate foster children who want to tell their stories. CitySquare partners with the Transition Resource Action Center ("TRAC") to assist teens as they transition out of the foster system. The clinic students will reach out to the teens at TRAC and invite them to participate in the project. The logistics of the project are continuing to unfold, but the clinic has high hopes for the final product and looks forward to the opportunities this project will present, both to the foster children and to society.

This project was conceived as a result of the Institute's recent collaboration with TRAC in the Institute's work. The seed funding for the project is being provided through a grant from the Golden Rule Family Foundation.