



National Council of Jewish Women

## **Advocates for Family Welfare: NCJW Then and Now**

From 1985 until 1998, NCJW operated its own internal research institute; the NCJW Center for the Child. The center promoted the well-being of children and families by increasing awareness of children's issues, improving programs for children, and influencing public and private policy affecting the welfare of children and families.

Center studies, such as "Mothers in the Workplace," evolved into programs to support families and assist caregivers – the Challenge for Community Action and the Family Day Care and Work/Family projects. And research findings provided support for legislative initiatives impacting children and their parents.

In 1993, based on the center's work, NCJW developed a special national project: NCJW Day of the Working Parent. On September 9 of that year, volunteers joined with government leaders, corporations, celebrities, nonprofit agencies, and American workers to focus attention on those who balanced job responsibilities with child and elder care. "Food for Thought" lunchboxes, filled with information were distributed around the country and to the First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Today, NCJW continues to work for quality, comprehensive child care, early childhood programs, and school-age programs that are affordable and accessible for all. We were proud to play a role in supporting passage of \$2 billion in funds for the Child Care Development Block Grant as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009.

NCJW has also been active in the fight for children's health insurance, backing the original passage of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or S-CHIP, in 1997 and its reauthorization and expansion, which was finally achieved in early 2009.

In June 2009, the *New York Jewish Week* published an op-ed by NCJW President Nancy Ratzan entitled "A National Call to Jewish Mothers: Support a Federal Budget that Protects our Children." NCJW continues to lobby for final passage of a family-friendly federal budget. As President Ratzan said in her op-ed:

"Addressing the needs of children with a focus on both the chronically disadvantaged and the victims of the current recession is not only a moral imperative, but a utilitarian one. When a sizeable portion of our population does not participate equitably in our economy, our need for publicly funded social services goes up and our collective ability to pay for them goes down.

"The welfare of children is a test of our will to ensure the well-being of future generations – those now in poverty and those more fortunate. The new federal budget must mark a new beginning for our children, and it is up to us, the Jewish mothers as well as the rest of the nation, to make sure that it does."

And NCJW is working on passage of the Healthy Families Act (HR 1902/S 932), introduced last April by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and the late Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA). The Healthy Families Act would guarantee workers the opportunity to earn up to seven paid sick days per year -- days that could be used to care for themselves, their children, or a family member when they are ill, as well as to deal with the consequences of domestic violence. Nearly half of private employees do not receive the same consideration. As such, men and women are forced to go to work sick, send a sick child to school, or improvise less-than-ideal solutions when a family member is sick