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Justice at Our Core Since 2005

July 2026

www.GaAppleseed.org

From One School Year to the Next

As kids head back to school, we're reflecting on what we've done and learned in the 2025-2026 year. Thanks to your support, hundreds of children and families across Georgia found stronger advocates, better outcomes, and brighter futures. Read below to learn how your support helped make this impact possible.

2025-2026 School Year Impact:

300 CHILDREN SERVED
70 GEORGIA COUNTIES
75 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

AI and Legal Help for Parents and Caregivers

A Georgia mom called us a few months back for help. Her elementary school son had been suspended from school for two weeks. During her first call with Georgia Appleseed School Justice Advocate Tanesse Brown, she mentioned that she had asked ChatGPT for advice. Tanesse was alarmed because much of what the mom reported from the chatbot was wrong. The chatbot incorrectly told mom that the school had violated federal law. And it had drafted her a threatening letter to send to the school, recommending a strategy that could have hurt the parent's relationship with the school without helping her son.

That experience led Georgia Appleseed to test the legal guidance that popular AI chatbots are giving families. We asked ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini questions based on real issues Georgia parents face when navigating school discipline and special education. The results were mixed: the tools often explained legal concepts clearly, but they also sometimes made risky assumptions, cited the wrong laws, and missed important context.

In a recent blog post, Executive Director Michael Waller shares what the chatbots got right, what they got wrong, and why human judgment still matters when families are advocating for their children. **The bottom line: AI can be useful, but it is not a substitute for judgment, context, or trusted advocacy.** That is where Georgia Appleseed comes in.

Learn what our pilot study revealed about AI-generated legal help for families navigating school discipline and special education in Michael's blog post, "*We Tested the AI Chatbots Georgia Parents Are Already Using. Here's What Went Wrong, and What Went Right.*"

[→ Read the blog](#)

Recognizing A Fearless Advocate



Georgia Appleseed is proud to share that **Senior Staff Attorney Jack Grote has been named the American Bar Association's Fearless Children's Lawyer of the Month for July 2026.** The award recognizes attorneys across the country whose advocacy has made a lasting difference in the lives of children. Jack's unwavering commitment to protecting students' rights and helping families navigate school discipline and special education reflects the heart of Georgia Appleseed's mission. [Read Jack's story.](#)

A School Year of Impact: FAIR Project Update

Our FAIR Project broke records this year! We served **over 300 children and their families** from **70 Georgia counties** and **75 school districts**.

Important trends:

- **Students with disabilities—particularly those with behavioral or mental health needs—remain disproportionately represented in discipline cases.**
- Too many families find us only after school disciplinary issues have escalated. Help us reach families before a crisis by sharing our free legal services with families in your community at referastudent.org or gaappleseed.org/fair-project.

Do you know a K-12 student or their caregiver who needs our help?

[**Refer them here**](#)

Free Legal Help for School Discipline, Enrollment & Special Education Issues

Need Help or Know a Child Who May Qualify?
gaappleseed.org/get-help



From Henry to Hall County: Our Coalitions Support Housing and Education Across Georgia

May Convening Connects Housing Stability and Student Success

Public school students experiencing homelessness topped 46,000 students last year, according to the Georgia Department of Education. But recent Georgia State University research suggests the number may actually be 3x higher. That data was presented at our May 14 joint Georgia Education Climate Coalition (GECC) and Georgia Healthy Housing Coalition (GHHH) meeting at the Henry County Chamber of Commerce. We had a lot to discuss, and everyone agreed: **instability and school discipline are connected problems. Check out some solutions on our [policy priorities page](#).**



Summer Coalition Meetings Center on Local Learnings

GHHH Convening | July 29

The Georgia Healthy Housing Coalition gathered in Gainesville for its summer convening, bringing together housing leaders, community partners, and advocates to discuss corporate ownership, local housing authority collaboration, and family well-being. Featured speakers Beth Brown, CEO of the Gainesville Housing Authority, and Jennifer Tullar, Housing and Special Projects Manager for the City of Gainesville, shared how collaboration between local housing authorities and city government is helping expand access to affordable housing in Hall County. Georgia Appleseed also highlighted Georgia's new eviction record sealing law (Senate Bill 406) and shared our new one-page resource

explaining what the law means for families across the state. Learn more by reading our eviction record sealing handout [here](#).

GECC Convening | July 30

Our Back-to-School themed GECC meeting in Gainesville focused on school climate and student wellbeing. Attendees learned how Hall County School District's vision of becoming "The Most Caring Place on Earth" has shaped efforts to support students, strengthen school climate, and promote mental health awareness. Guest speakers included Commissioner Kevin Tanner of Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Hall County School District Assistant Superintendent Suzanne Jarrard, and long-time school climate expert and advocate Dr. Garry McGibboney.

For more information about GHHC or GECC, or to request materials or recordings from past meetings (when available), email ghhc@gaappleseed.org or gecc@gaappleseed.org.

Play with Purpose: Young Professionals in Action

Our Young Professionals Council hosted two successful summer events — the **Spellbound for Justice** scrabble tournament in June and a **Pickleball Social** in July. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsoring law firms, including those who sent their summer associates to join the fun, these events combined friendly competition, networking, and an introduction to Georgia Appleseed's mission. See photos below!

Interested in learning more? Visit www.gaappleseed.org/ypc or email us at ypc@gaappleseed.org — we'd love to connect!

Spellbound for Justice | June 3, 2026





Pickleball Social | July 22, 2026



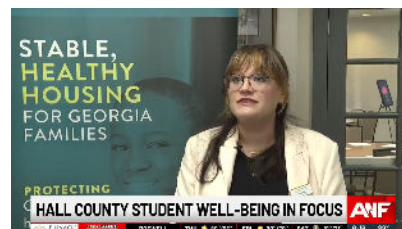
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Appleseed in the News

WANF TV News Covers GHHC

Georgia Appleseed's Policy Counsel, Luci Ruiz, is interviewed on WANF Atlanta News First at the Georgia Healthy Housing Coalition meeting in Gainesville.

[View Luci's interview.](#)



Coalition-Building the Focus of CXO Dispatch

Georgia Appleseed's Legal & Policy Director, Darlene Lynch, is featured by CXO Dispatch in a taped video and an article titled "How to Build Bipartisan Coalitions That Drive Real Policy Change," which highlights the behind-the-scenes work we do to advance meaningful policy change across the state. [View Darlene's interview.](#)



Housing Justice Work Highlighted in Shelterforce

Luci Ruiz was quoted in *Shelterforce* discussing the growing movement to advance tenants' rights across the South and the importance of statewide collaboration to improve housing stability.

[Read the article.](#)

See Me Project Featured on 11Alive

Georgia Appleseed's See Me project was highlighted by 11Alive for empowering Georgia teens with foster care experience to share their stories through art and advocacy.

[Watch the segment.](#)

YPC Spellbound Noted in Upper Westside Atlanta Magazine

Georgia Appleseed's Young Professionals Council was featured in Upper Westside Atlanta Magazine for hosting Spellbound for Justice, a Scrabble tournament that brought together emerging leaders, community members, and supporters to raise funds and awareness for Georgia Appleseed's work advancing justice for children and families.

[Read the article.](#)

New Address, Same Mission

We've updated our mailing address! While our mission remains the same, our mailing address has changed. Please use the address below for all future correspondence:

Georgia Appleseed
3000 Windy Hill Rd SE #672292
Marietta, GA 30067

Support Us

Your donation grows our impact and supports children across Georgia.
Connecting with you helps us build our community of advocates and amplify





our mission to advance justice statewide. View our video library on **YouTube**, and follow us on **Instagram**, **LinkedIn** and **FaceBook**.



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