



WWASP Slammed by Federal Court

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Children's Programs Marred by Scandal
PRESS RELEASE

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SALT LAKE CITY, Utah (July 9, 2006) – The World Wide Association of Specialty Programs (WWASP), a highly controversial and monster-size corporation, with a reputation for crushing everyday moms and dads, lost yet again--this time in the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Jeff Berryman, a Pennsylvania advocate for children, was vindicated in his efforts to blow the whistle on WWASP for child abuse, neglect, and fraud. Robert Browning Lichfield, the founder and self-described consultant to WWASP, met those claims of abuse by dragging Mr. Berryman into Utah with a lawsuit designed to silence him once and for all. Mr. Berryman, however, prevailed.

The Federal Court of Appeals gave examples of news media description of child abuse and neglect at World Wide schools: "[T]he news magazine 48 Hours reported a child's allegation that he had been handcuffed for two consecutive days and had his mouth covered in duct tape. The Miami Herald ran an article describing a mother's report that her teenager came home from a World Wide school with ringworm scars and chemical burns. Forbes Magazine reported that children were punched, kicked, thrown, and forced to sit on cement floors for twelve hours at a time. The teenager quoted in the article also claimed that students who tried to flee from such punishment were locked in a small cell for days."

The Court found WWASP to be a limited purpose public figure, thereby ratcheting up the standard of legal proof WWASP must bear in future attacks: "World Wide's mission as a marketing company is to take an active role in this debate by both promoting its members' programs and defending those programs that are marred by scandal." According to the Court, World Wide thrust itself to the forefront of the public controversy for the purpose of influencing the issues involved.

The Court found that defendants PURE and Sue Scheff, "[C]ompete with the schools associated with World Wide. PURE schools pay Ms. Scheff a substantial sum whenever a child enrolls in its program based on her recommendation." On the issue of civil conspiracy with Ms. Scheff, the Court found in favor of Mr. Berryman, stating, "If any reasonable inferences were to be drawn from the evidence, it is that Mr. Berryman and Ms. Scheff operated separately, rather than together." The Court described Jeff Berryman as an independent advocate. In contrast, although winning the defense, Ms. Scheff and PURE lost on all counter-claims against WWASP.

This is not the first time Lichfield and WWASP have targeted critics. Among those who have worked to expose abuses of the WWASP Empire are news reporter Thomas Houlahan, advocate Shelby Earnshaw and her watchdog organization, ISAC, teen advocate Barbie Stamp, and former employees. Amberly Knight, the former director of WWASP affiliated Dundee Ranch Academy, was threatened with a lawsuit by WWASP lawyer J. Ralph Atkin if Ms. Knight did not buckle to the lawyer's threats and retract her claims of child abuse to a child protection agency. Atkin and WWASP backed off after receiving a stinging letter from Sheldon Miller, a well-known Detroit lawyer, egging the group to "bring it on."

Washington D.C. news reporter Thomas Houlahan was the first advocate to successfully defeat WWASP in federal court on grounds of personal jurisdiction. The ISAC case is pending in southern Utah. Ms. Earnshaw and ISAC are represented by Attorney Phil Elberg. Mr. Elberg, a New Jersey lawyer, won a settlement of \$4.5 million against an abusive children's program, and he expects to win against WWASP in its efforts to silence his clients. ###

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