

Kurth writes chapter on fathers' rights movement

Jan Kurth, JCCC grant professional, joins a group of leading experts as a chapter contributor to *Domestic Violence, Abuse and Child Custody*, a book published this spring with lead authors Mo Therese Hannah, PhD, and Barry Goldstein, JD.

Kurth's chapter, *Historical Origins of the Fathers' Rights Movements*, is a survey of the fathers' rights movement in Western history, tracing how the movement emerges in response to the modest success of women's rights in 19th century Great Britain and builds momentum in the United States, especially during the last 30 years.

"For most of Western history, women had no legal rights to their children. This didn't begin to change until the 19th century. Most people know about Susan B. Anthony's 1868 call for women to vote, but it was also a call for women to have custody of their own children. Up until that time, in the rare cases of divorce, children always went to their fathers," Kurth said.

Hannah, professor of psychology, Siena College, Loudonville, New York, and chair of the annual Battered Mothers Custody Conference, and Goldstein, N.Y., lawyer for 30 years who represented protective mothers (mothers trying to protect a child from fathers with a history of child abuse or neglect), wrote the book to counter decisions by family court judges ordering children into unsupervised visitation and custody with abusive biological fathers.

"I look at attempts by the fathers' rights movement to deny the fact that domestic violence takes place or deny that it is an important factor in child custody decisions. Fathers' rights have been involved in efforts to institutionalize joint custody in divorce cases regardless of a father's history of domestic violence and to eliminate or roll back funding for battered women's shelters," Kurth said.



Jan Kurth, JCCC grant professional, is seen here with the new book containing her chapter on the fathers' rights movement.

Kurth, a protective parent and veteran of the family court system, knew the lead authors through her involvement with the Battered Mothers Custody Conference, held annually for seven years in upstate New York. Contributing authors include scholars, legal professionals and activists like Kurth, a writer with a long-standing interest in history. Kurth has a bachelor's degree in science, technology and society from Vassar and a master's degree in urban planning from State University of New York at Buffalo. She is a former columnist for the Jamestown, N.Y., *Post-Journal*. Her first novel, *Broken Angels*, was published in 2008.

In her fathers' rights chapter, Kurth examines attempts by the movement to say that men are battered as much as women, if not more so, despite the fact that serious research doesn't support that. The bottom line for the movement: the father is in absolute control of the home with the ultimate authority over women and children.

Kurth believes her chapter is fairly unique in following the development of the fathers' rights-based argument.

The one surprise for her? "The anti-feminist arguments articulated in the late 19th century are the same arguments you hear today." **Im**