2001 Legislative Successes
Should Fuel Future Efforts

CAA and child advocates throughout the state seized the opportunities created by a new legislature and a new budget to make significant strides to improve the lives of children and families. Public concern about conditions for children and support for efforts to improve those conditions were evident during the 2000 election. Thanks to the actions of parents and business leaders, community and religious leaders, and voters concerned about kids, we were able build on that groundswell of support to convince policy-makers in this session to expand or improve key services for Arizona kids and parents.

CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH

In her January State of the State Address, Governor Jane Dee Hull joined the voices of parents and community leaders statewide in calling for expanded distribution of information through schools to encourage parents to enroll their children in KidsCare, Arizona’s health insurance program for children in working families.

Thanks to the efforts of Representatives Deb Gullett, Pete Hershberger, John Loredo and Tom O’Halleran, and Senators Susan Gerard, Randall Grant, Ruth Solomon and the late Andy Nichols, legislation signed by Governor Hull in May allows schools to be full partners in efforts to inform parents about KidsCare. The legislation also decreases from six months to three months the amount of time a child must go without health insurance to qualify for KidsCare. In addition, the benefits covered through KidsCare were expanded to include more behavioral health treatment, increased vision services and non-emergency transportation.

Child advocates also hailed the successful passage of legislation to implement Proposition 204, a ballot initiative approved by Arizona voters in November that expands eligibility for AHCCCS health insurance to all Arizonans with incomes below the federal poverty level ($17,650 for a family of four). Implementation of the initiative also will include increased funding for six public health programs, including Health Start and Healthy Families. Neither the ballot initiative nor the subsequent legislation would have been possible without the dedicated and determined leadership of the late Senator Andy Nichols.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Thanks to the efforts of appropriations committee chairs Senator Ruth Solomon and Representative Laura Knaperek, the state budget signed by Governor Hull in April includes funding to help Child Protective Services improve efforts to find safe, permanent homes for abused and neglected children in Arizona.

Inadequate staff training and overwhelming caseloads have resulted in a turnover rate of 26 percent and in one-third of the children in foster care not getting the required minimum monthly visit from their caseworker.

The budget includes funding for 104 additional CPS staff to reduce caseloads and implement a training academy and family group decision-making program.

This year’s legislative successes also include a measure that requires CPS to help the parents of children in voluntary foster care get the services they need so that children can return home safely and permanently. (continued on page 5)
COMMENTARY

We know who’s watching the car... But Who’s Watching the Kids?

What media hoopies! All across the country – on the front pages of newspapers, on radio talk shows, leading the local news – we were misled into believing that kids who spend more than 30 hours per week in child care are more likely to be aggressive by the time they get to kindergarten than children who are at home. Translation to parents of kids in full-time child care: In ten years, that gun-toting teenager holding his/her school hostage will be yours!

But, before parents drown themselves in guilt, they should know that left out of most media reports was that 83 percent of children studied showed no such tendencies, that almost all “aggressive” kids were within the range of normal behavior for four-year-olds, and that indicators of aggression included talking too much and demanding attention.

The media also conveniently left out another finding: kids in good child care programs tend to develop better language skills and are better prepared for school than children at home.

The media’s sound bytes, headline-grabbing, report didn’t surprise me, but the firestorm created by the refueling of some ancient disputes did. One accomplished author bragged on a radio talk show that she did not work for the first 10 years of her children’s lives, adding that this should be the goal of all mothers. Other welfare rats cried the study as a backlash to women’s success outside the home.

Aren’t we beyond this kind of debate? The reality is that for most parents child care is a fact of life. Over half of all working mothers in this country earn half or more of their family income. Since child care can easily cost an average of $4,000 to $7,000 a year, and since only a limited number of parents qualify for public subsidy, the enormous challenge for most parents is to find affordable child care that meets the needs of their child and their work life.

Add to that challenge the issue of quality. Studies tell us that the quality of most child care is mediocre at best, and that there is an alarmingly unstable workforce at child care centers that is paid, on average, the same as parking lot attendants. For most parents the problem is not child care but bad child care.

We know what good child care looks like: small group sizes; well-paid and trained staff; use of community resources; and, parent involvement. We also know that the early years lay the groundwork for much of a child’s brain development and their ability to be successful students.

But, for those who need more proof: a 15-year study recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association shows that 3- and 4-year-olds in Chicago’s high quality Child-Parent Center Program were much less likely to engage in crime or drop out of high school.

The question is not whether kids are better off in child care or at home. This is simply a distraction from the real question: How do we use the last twenty years of research to create and finance high quality early care and education?

And while we’re asking questions, how about asking why we pay more to people who watch our cars than to people who care for our kids?

Carol F. Warren

Through the Eyes of a Child Gala to Honor Tucson Advocate

Mark your calendars for September 15th and Through the Eyes of a Child 2001! This night will be a celebration of the joys of childhood as we hear from talented young performers and bid on the early masterpieces of some of Arizona’s budding young artists.

We also will be honoring the 2001 Horace Steele Child Advocacy Award recipient, Louise Thomas. Ms. Thomas has been a guiding light and a driving force behind the Children’s Research Center in Tucson for many years. She also founded Angel Charity for Children, which raises funds for children’s causes, and the Tucson chapter of Ronald McDonald House.

The 2001 Through the Eyes of a Child Gala will be held at the Arizona Biltmore Resort in Phoenix on September 15. For sponsorship information and tickets, please contact Linda Hahn at 602-266-6707, or email her at lhahn@archildren.org.

BOARD PROFILES

People Who Care

Laura Treman Almquist

Laura Treman Almquist – known as Lolly to friends and colleagues - served as Vice President of CAA’s Board of Directors from 1987 to 1992. She rejoined the board last year, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge amassed from the many state and local organizations in which she has participated during the past 30 years.

Lolly’s concern and compassion for vulnerable children have been the driving force behind her work with Tucson organizations, including the Tucson Unified School District Governing Board, Casa de los Ninos and Family Counseling Agency.

Lolly was appointed to serve as the first chair of the Governor’s Office for Children by Governor Bruce Babbitt, and then as chair of the subsequent task forces on child care regulations, child abuse prevention, and inter-agency cooperation.

In 1995, Lolly retired as Director of Grants and Programs at the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona. She currently serves on the boards of University Medical Center, the Tucson Urban League and the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona.

Lolly lives with her husband in Tucson, where she has made her home since 1958.

Marty Latz

Marty Latz is the founder of The Negotiations Institute – an international firm that provides negotiation training programs, seminars and consulting to corporations, law firms, public entities and individuals. A Harvard Law School honors graduate, Marty is also an Adjunct Professor at the Arizona State University Law School.

Marty is a regular columnist for The Phoenix Business Journal, where he writes monthly negotiations and opinions columns.

Despite his demanding work schedule, Marty finds time to give back to his community through involvement in several community organizations, including Valley Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Marty also sits on the Board of Directors of the Anti-Defamation League, Harvard Club of Phoenix, Herberger Theater Center, and Hillel Advisory Council at ASU.

Marty said he was inspired to become a board member at CAA by his strong belief that “the most effective way to address many of the long-term problems in Arizona is to attack them at the front end by giving all children the tools they need to be successful. The agency that can have the most positive impact on improving children’s lives is CAA.”

Marty was unwavering in his efforts last year while serving on the Steering Committee of CAA’s Through the Eyes of a Child fund-raising event. His enthusiasm and dedication were instrumental in helping CAA exceed its goals, and Marty has generously volunteered to lend his expertise to this year’s event.

INSIDE CAA

Children’s Action Alliance is proud to welcome two new staff members and one new member to our Board of Directors.

Brian Heffern joined CAA in December as a program associate in the areas of child welfare and state fiscal analysis. Brian has worked on political campaigns in Arizona for the past four years; most recently, he was a vital member of the team that spearheaded the Healthy Children, Healthy Families Initiative.

Linda Hahn joined CAA in February as the Senior Program Associate for Development. Linda comes to us from the Scottsdale Cultural Council. We’re sure her experience in grant writing and fundraising will be a crucial part of the success of this year’s Through the Eyes of a Child Gala and upcoming grant-writing campaigns.

Brenda Spender joined the CAA Board of Directors in March. Brenda manages Wells Fargo’s contributions, government relations, community sponsorships and volunteer programs throughout Arizona. Her community activities and knowledge of issues affecting Arizona make her a great addition to our board!
Arizona Missing Prime Time of Brain Growth:

CAA Report Presents Solutions

A powerful combination of scientific discoveries about human brain development, parenting experience, and social science research prove that the earliest years are critical to a child's lifelong ability to achieve and succeed. But CAA's newest report, Male Kids Count: Giving Babies a Smart Beginning, describes how Arizona is missing the prime time of brain growth.

Recent scientific research concludes that 90 percent of brain development occurs between birth and age three. In the first year alone, the number of neural connections in the brain, called synapses, multiplies tenfold. What children learn and experience during their first few years literally determines the wiring of the brain and - for better or worse - can affect the rest of their lives.

For too many Arizona children, the early years are tough ones. High poverty rates, lack of health insurance, and poor quality child care all contribute to poor outcomes for Arizona children. The greater the accumulation of risk factors, the worse the consequences. Astonishingly, in 1999, more than one out of every three Arizona infants were born to families with two or more risk factors.

Obviously, parents play the most major role in the healthy development of children - teaching them, and providing love and security. However, as any parent will describe, this is not a job they can do alone. All parents rely on faculty, friends, health care, and other community institutions. Unfortunately, Arizona's network of support services for parents is under-funded, uncoordinated, and weak. Programs are small and too often are of poor quality.

The report presents an action agenda to dramatically improve the health and well-being of our next generation. Developed by a Smart Beginnings task force of community leaders, these recommendations include action for parents, businesses, community organizations, health care providers, religious institutions, and the media. In addition, the report calls for leadership and policy-makers, enhanced quality standards for early childhood programs, and significant new funding to expand effective prevention and early care services.

The report was made possible through funding from St. Luke's Health Initiatives and a partnership with Southwest Human Development.

KIDSCOUNT
Arizona's Drop to 45th Means We Have to Try Harder

Last month, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the 2001 KIDSCOUNT Data Book ranking all 50 states on key measures of child well-being. Compared to last year, Arizona showed improvement in several areas. But Arizona's overall ranking dropped from 41 to 45 resulting from increases in the dropout rate, the infant mortality rate, and the teen birthrate. Another report released by the Casey Foundation in February ranked the states on risk indicators at birth. Both reports show that Arizona clearly needs to try harder to reach our goal of leaving no child behind.

Where Does Arizona Rank?

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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Arizona Rank</th>
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<tr>
<td>Low birth-weight babies</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Births to moms with less than 12 yrs. education</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>Births to moms who smoked during pregnancy</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teen Birth rate</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>Percent of teens who are high school dropouts</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>Percent of children in poverty</td>
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(continued from page 1)

CHILD CARE

Governor Hull, along with Representatives Deb Gollett and Carolyn Allen, led efforts to expand the information available to parents about home-based child care businesses. Beginning in March 2002, operators of these businesses who care for four or fewer children must meet basic safety guidelines and submit to a criminal background check and a CPS check in order to be listed on the state's voluntary referral system for parents. A registry also will be created listing parent complaints and provider responses.

The state also increased the safety of licensed child care businesses statewide by increasing Department of Health Services staff to inspect facilities for health and safety standards. Due to staffing shortages, many facilities were operating as long as two years without the required annual inspection.

Task Force Tackles Access to Early Learning

In April, Children's Action Alliance launched the Arizona School Readiness Task Force, a group of community leaders in business, education, early care and social services whose charge is to identify innovative strategies that will expand parents' options for high quality preschool and child care.

The task force is chaired by Bill Post, President and CEO of Arizona Public Service, who has a long history of support for children's issues in the Valley.

At the April task force meeting, Dr. Jill Stamm, president of the New Directions Institute for Infant Brain Development, gave members an overview of the scientific research about early brain growth. With graphic images of brain scans, she illustrated the devastating neurological consequences when babies and toddlers don't get the basic attention, touch and stimulation they need for healthy growth. The task force also discussed the confusion and problems resulting from divided oversight of early care settings in Arizona - responsibilities which are divided among three different state agencies, as well as federal regulations.

In future meetings, task force members will be touring local early care and education facilities to examine their successes and challenges. They also will be exploring strategies used by other states to promote access to quality programs. The work of the task force is made possible through a grant from Lucent Technologies and the Arizona Community Foundation.
Voting for Kids

The 2001 Legislative session was tough but rewarding for Children’s Action Alliance and its mission to promote the well-being of Arizona’s children and families.

Among the successful bills we advocated for were measures to enhance school outreach for KidsCare and increase the information available to parents about home-based child care businesses.

The following table illustrates the voting record of state legislators on these two bills.

For information on additional legislative action affecting children and families, please see the story on Page 1 or visit the CAA website at www.azchildren.org.

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SB 1087 – KidsCare. Reduces the amount of time a child must go without health insurance in order to qualify for KidsCare; expands the benefits provided in behavioral health, vision and non-emergency transportation; promotes outreach on KidsCare through schools.

HB 2185 – Child Care Registry. Creates a voluntary registry for home-based child care businesses that care for four or fewer children for compensation. To be included in the state’s referral system, businesses must pass a criminal fingerprint check and CPS check and must agree to minimal health and safety measures. The legislation also creates a registry for complaints on these businesses, as well as responses from the providers.

KIDS CARE

Advocacy Efforts Increase KidsCare Enrollment

KidsCare, the state’s health insurance program for children in families, has been in place since 1998. CAA continues to be an integral part of breaking down barriers for eligible children and families to apply for KidsCare and expanding outreach efforts in schools.

In March and April, CAA hosted four focus groups in Tucson, Yuma and Phoenix for parents whose children qualify for KidsCare but have not applied. Findings from the focus groups show that parents have not applied for three major reasons: they do not think they qualify for the program; they believe the application process will be difficult and intimidating; and, they have not received enough information about KidsCare, especially through schools. CAA will use this information as we coordinate our future advocacy efforts.

Legislation was enacted this year that encourages schools to be full partners in KidsCare outreach efforts (see story Page 3). This will be particularly useful as CAA begins two important campaigns. The first is the statewide distribution of our KidsCare School Outreach Kit, which gives school staff members everything they need—-including free training—in order to do outreach during campus activities. The second is a back-to-school campaign funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. As part of this campaign, CAA will organize school outreach efforts in Tucson during early August. RWJ will complement those efforts with a paid advertising campaign that should reach most of southern Arizona.

CAA is proud to be a partner in efforts to reduce the number of uninsured children in Arizona.

Corporate Partners

Children’s Action Alliance is grateful for the financial support of large and small businesses throughout Arizona. This is part of an occasional series of profiles of our business contributors.

APS

For 115 years, APS has served the energy needs of Arizona. More importantly, however, is that for more than a century, APS has served the people of Arizona.

Through financial support and volunteer efforts, APS strives to make Arizona a better place. In the year 2000, APS pledged more than $6 million, while company employees volunteered more than 65,000 hours to assist causes in the areas of health and human services, the environment, arts and culture, civic and community, and education.

Everyone at APS, from corporate officers to frontline employees, understands the importance of giving back to the community. Children’s Action Alliance is proud to count APS as a partner in our work to help all children in Arizona.

Help Us Do Right By Arizona’s Children

We are Arizona’s children - 1.3 million hopes for the future.

- It is right for us to live free from abuse and neglect.
- It is right for us to have quality health care.
- It is right for us to start school ready to learn.
- It is right for us to have safe, nurturing child care before and after school.
- It is right for us to have a quality education.
- It is right for us to live outside of poverty.

Your tax-deductible contribution to Children’s Action Alliance makes a difference by giving us the voice to act as champions for children with elected officials and policy makers. Join us today, to educate the public and to convince individuals and organizations to get involved.

Do Right By Arizona’s Children. Join Us Today!

Name:
Address:
City: State: ZIP:
Phone:
Visa/Master Card #: FAX:
Expiration Date:

You can use my name publicly as a supporter. Please mail your contribution to: Children’s Action Alliance, 4001 North Third Street, Suite 160, Phoenix, AZ 85012.

CHINA MIST TEA COMPANY

The mission statement of China Mist includes being a good corporate citizen. Co-owners Dan Schell and John Martinson feel that they are responsible for giving back to the community that has been so good to them. John and Dan “spend more time on community work than most companies would allow, but that is one of the joys of being privately owned.”

China Mist encourages its employees to become involved in the community. Every employee is granted a corporate donation of $250 to any charity of their choice, as well as eight hours each year of paid time to perform volunteer work in the community during business hours.

Children’s Action Alliance is fortunate to have China Mist as a corporate partner and is grateful for its ongoing support.
New! Kidscount 2001 — Ranks Arizona compared to 49 other U.S. states on ten indicators of child well-being.

New! Make Kids Count: Giving Babies a Smart Beginning — report detailing how Arizona is missing the “prime time” of brain growth for babies and toddlers.


Hours of Risk or Opportunity? The State of School-Age Care in Arizona — a preliminary look at the demand and supply of after-school programs.

The Right Start — set of two volumes that rank the 50 states and the 55 largest U.S. cities on health risks and family factors affecting children from birth.


Make Kids Count: Closing the Gap in Children’s Health Care Coverage — description of existing health care programs in Arizona and recommendations to further shrink the number of uninsured children.

Survival Tips for Parents Getting Public Assistance — questions and answers on welfare work requirements, time limits, child care and more (available in English and Spanish).

Strengthening Families — bulletin examining budget and tax legislation proposed during the 2001 session.

To order a publication, please visit our website at www.azchildren.org, or call Liz Barker at (502) 266-0707.

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