Dear Friends,

Welcome to Volume One of the Children’s Action Alliance newsletter, ACT, ARIZONA CHILDREN TODAY. The purpose of this first newsletter is to introduce you to the Children’s Action Alliance (CAA) - to our staff, our projects, and our goals. Future issues will concentrate on specific child and family programs, policies and legislation.

CAA exists to provide a strong and effective voice for the children of Arizona who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We were incorporated in 1988 as a private non-profit corporation, supported by foundations, corporate grants, and private donations.

The fundamental purpose of CAA is to increase the awareness of Arizonans about the needs of children and to encourage investment in these children before they get sick, are abused, drop-out of school, or get into trouble. Our focus is on programs and policies that affect large numbers of children, rather than on a case-by-case basis. We mobilize citizens to act on behalf of children by initiating efforts to:

- improve the quality and increase the supply of affordable child care programs;
- increase the availability of early childhood programs for at-risk young children;
- increase support for services for abused and neglected children;
- create programs for homeless children and youth;
- improve the scope and strength of public and private services for poor children and their families; and,
- help low income families access maternal and child health and nutritional services.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating condition of a growing number of Arizona’s children and their families and recognize that their future can cut two ways: as a burden which drags down the rest of the State, or as an energetic force which will help shape the Arizona of the future. We are firmly committed to helping give substance to that energetic force.

The specific issues we work on are chosen out of recognition that babies whose mothers receive inadequate prenatal care often face serious, recurring medical problems. Children who are hungry confront unnecessary and potentially devastating health risks. Vulnerable four-year-olds who cannot attend preschool lag behind classmates from the first day of kindergarten. Children without homes often will suffer irreparable physical and psychological harm. Poverty denies opportunity and creates problems that do not disappear.

In the words of Marion Wright Edelman, President of the Children’s Defense Fund, “Democracy is not a spectator sport.” We need the help of all of Arizona’s citizens to make Arizona a land of opportunity - for every child. We hope that through ACT we can provide you with information and ideas that will serve to empower you in your community. We hope that you will use this information and CAA’s other project reports, as described in this first newsletter, to create a better Arizona for all of our children.

Carol Kamin
Executive Director
On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Children's Action Alliance, welcome to this first edition of ARIZONA CHILDREN TODAY, ACT.

My involvement with CAA is as a result of my firm belief that the quality of life of our State's children is the single most important determinant of Arizona's future. As we bend into the twenty-first century, I am concerned about the waste of human resources. If present trends continue, Arizona will face a scarcity of qualified people in the work force which will seriously damage our competitive position in an increasingly challenging marketplace.

The business community has been involved and committed to improving our public school education. This is good. However, we also must recognize that reforms targeted at the educational system alone rarely address the pressing needs of at-risk infants, children and families. We believe that effective solutions must address the broader needs of children from their earliest years and that only through early and sustained intervention in their lives will we truly improve their level of achievement.

The issues are complicated and difficult. Solutions will require cooperation, understanding and support from both the private and public sectors. The Board of Directors of the CAA is committed to improving the lives of Arizona's children. With your help, we will succeed.

Mark DeMichele
President

THE TIME IS NOW...

THE ARIZONA CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN

PLAYING THE WAITING GAME

For too long Arizona's children have been told to wait. Children who cannot vote, lobby, or speak out for themselves have had their lives put on hold while other priorities took precedent with policy makers. While they have been waiting, children have become the most poverty stricken of all Arizonans. A decade ago children in Maricopa County made up approximately one-third of those in poverty, today they are half. One child in four in Arizona is born into poverty.

Has Arizona become a bad place for a good start?

The well-being of Arizona's children is dramatically declining.

The vast majority of poor children and their families live lives of quiet desperation. As Marion Wright Edelman, President and Founder of the Children's Defense Fund states, "In twenty years, children born today will either be working for us, living with us, or avoiding us."

A recent statewide poll commissioned by the Children's Action Alliance reflected Arizonans understanding that if we do not invest in our children today, we will pay the price tomorrow in increased crime, drug abuse and welfare dependency. These statistics speak for themselves:

- 68% of Arizonans believe ensuring children a good education, quality child care and good health care early in life helps prevent drug abuse and crime later
- 71% support an increase in state funding for services to help needy children and infants
- 70% believe our political leaders are not doing enough to help solve children's problems

Interpreting this statewide poll as a mandate for action on behalf of Arizona's children, CAA has launched the Arizona Children's Campaign. Sponsored by the Children’s Action Alliance, the Arizona Community Foundation and the Washington D.C. based Children’s Defense Fund the goals of the campaign are twofold:

- To improve the quality of life for Arizona’s vulnerable children and their families by influencing public policies and budget decisions.
- To make children's problems a subject of intense thought, debate, and action by all policy and decision makers, the news media, and the public. The issues of the Arizona Children's Campaign are: Maternal and child health, early care and education, abused and neglected children, homelessness and housing, and poverty. To reach these goals, the Arizona Children’s Campaign will be conducted in three simultaneous tiers:
  - A public information and media campaign to alert the general public to the critical nature of children’s problems and mobilize them to action through billboards, meetings with reporters and editorial boards, letters to the editor, and publications on issues.
  - A supporters campaign to teach people like you, who are concerned about children, to be an effective voice on their behalf. This will be accomplished through a series of workshops to be held throughout Arizona on the issues and advocacy techniques.
  - A policy and lawmakers campaign to educate elected officials on the status of children and encourage them to support legislation to improve the situation. Prior to his election, the Governor indicated his support for "A Platform For Arizona's Children," a CAA publication which marked the beginning of the Arizona Children's Campaign. The "Platform" contains specific public policy recommendations on issues which offer the most opportunity for significant change for children. Gubernatorial support presents an opportunity for executive level leadership to make the goals of the Platform a reality.

"REFORM IS NO SPORT FOR THE SHORT-WINDED"While recognizing that all public policy recommendations in the Platform are equally important, the Arizona Children's Campaign chose to initiate its legislative agenda with issues pertaining to the beginning of life. The focus of 1991 revolves around two ideas: pay now or pay more later, and the theme used by early childhood advocates "good beginnings never end." With that in mind, 1991 Campaign efforts will be focused on:

- Improving nutrition for mothers and young children
- Assuring adequate prenatal care for all pregnant women in Arizona
- Increasing funding of at-risk preschool programs

To accomplish this, the Arizona Children's Campaign, CAA is committed to a project which is long term and waged on many fronts.

We will take all of us, but together we can turn Arizona around.

It is time... and the time is now.

Call Irene or Gail at CAA offices for more information.

KIDS COUNT GRANT AWARDED TO ARIZONA

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, has awarded the Children’s Action Alliance in conjunction with the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, a four year grant to gather and publish data measuring the health, social, education and economic status of Arizona’s children and to advocate for public policy changes to assist Arizona’s vulnerable children to receive better education, health care, and social services.

Arizona was one of only eight states chosen to receive this grant. Seventy-one applicants from 49 states and the District of Columbia submitted proposals. The Children’s Action Alliance will be the catalyst for advocacy on behalf of the State’s children through the work of the Arizona Children’s Campaign. CAA will subcontract with the Morrison Institute for Public Policy to conduct the data collection.

The first task will be to assemble the Arizona Kids Count Partnership Advisory Committee. This committee will be co-chaired by Mark DeMichele, President of CAA, and Bill Jimenez, Arizona Children's Campaign Co-chair. Members of the Partnership Advisory Committee include: Linda Moore-Cannon, Director of the Department of Economic Security; Ted Williams, Director of the Department of Health Services; C. Diane Bishop, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Carol Hurt, Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice; Leonard Kirschen, Director of AHCOS; and Toni Nigs-Carter, Director of the Governor’s Office for Children.

By the end of the first year of the grant, CAA and Morrison Institute will have completed a
FACTBOOK on Arizona’s Children demonstrating the status of Arizona’s children. Using the data from the Factbook, CAA will publish a “Report Card” which grades Arizona on how well we treat our youngest citizens. “Report Card” in years two and four of the grant will measure our progress toward improving the status of our state’s children.

For further information please call Irene Jacobs at CAA offices.

NO PLACE TO CALL HOME

Homelessness. Homeless Street People. We see these words more and more in newspapers and magazines. At least once a week, and frequently more often, our television screens are filled with pictures of men, women and children living on our Nation’s streets. It is used to be that the word “homeless” brought to mind single males wasted on liquor or drugs. The stereotypical “wino” or “derelict” was the standard portrayal of a homeless person. Not any more.

Throughout the country, families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. If this trend continues, by the year 2000 - just nine years from now - millions of American children will have spent at least a part of their childhoods without a home. In Arizona, over 10,000 families are without an address. Arizona shelters turn away hundreds of homeless families every month due to lack of space.

Over two years ago, the Children’s Action Alliance established a Task Force on Homeless Children and Youth. With support from the Margaret T. Morris Foundation, Task Force members and CAA staff were successful in helping to enact legislation aimed at improving the quality of lives of homeless children.

The Homeless Education Bill (SB 1060), now allows a homeless child admission to school without meeting stringent residency requirements. This has helped to overcome a significant barrier which effectively barred homeless children from attending school.

Two separate bills (HB 2319 & HB 2537) established an office within the Department of Economic Security (DES) to work in preventing homelessness by developing and coordinating services designed to return homeless people to self-sufficiency.

- House Bill 2560 expanded the Department of Economic Security (DES), Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), to establish a Housing Assistance Program to reunite dependent children, who are in the custody of the department pursuant to court order, with their families when homelessness is the only barrier to reunification.

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT (HB2902)

Even with three legislative bills in place, a significant portion of homeless children will not be served. Last year approximately 4,500 Arizona children between the ages of 12 and 18 were homeless. Half of these children are fleeing physically or sexually abusive home environments. Many of these children are “throw away kids” - children whose parents make a conscious decision to push them out the house - these children often join the population of street people. Youth-in-need are outside the jurisdiction of programs that serve children until they are 16 years old and have the rights of adults.

In recognition of this problem, the Children’s Action Alliance took the lead role in drafting House Bill 2902, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, to develop a comprehensive statewide plan to provide critically needed programs and overcome barriers to services for runaway and homeless youth. As a direct result of this legislation, the Governor and legislature appointed an Advisory Task Force on Runaway and Homeless Youth. The members of this Task Force, including four legislators, nine community representatives and two youth representatives, are charged with the responsibility of overseeing the development of a coordinated statewide system of services for homeless and runaway youth.

The Children’s Action Alliance was awarded a contract from the Department of Economic Security to coordinate the activities of the Advisory Task Force on Runaway and Homeless Youth. For further information regarding this project, call Cyra Bauman at CAA offices.

SUCCESS BY 6

In October 1980, through the vision and support of Honeywell, U.S. West, and The Arizona Republic/The Phoenix Gazette, Children’s Action Alliance (CAA) initiated SUCCESS BY 6 in Arizona. CAA’s plan was to “stimulate interest and action in Arizona corporations, businesses, governmental agencies, community organizations, and the media in the economic and human resources for investing in Arizona’s at-risk young children.” Specifically, CAA proposed to develop strategies toward ensuring that by 1985 all Arizona’s at-risk three-and four-year-old children would have an opportunity to participate in a high quality, comprehensive early childhood program.

WHY DOES ARIZONA NEED SUCCESS BY 6?

More than any other states, Arizona is not adequately addressing the condition of its children - we have one of the worst records in the country. According to the Children’s Defense Fund and other national reports, among the 50 states (1 is high and 50 is low) we rank:

- 52nd because of the percent of children living in poverty
- 46th in the proportion of women who have prenatals care
- 48th because of the rate of juvenile incarceration
- 48th in high school graduation rate
- 48th because of the rate of children and youth who take their own lives

The lack of Arizona’s investment in proven preventive strategies, such as high quality, comprehensive early childhood programs for at-risk young children, serves to explain some of our ratings. Research clearly indicates that for every $1 invested in early childhood development programs $6 is returned in reduced welfare payments, remedial education, and prison costs. And yet, Arizona spends only $600,000 on comprehensive early childhood programs for at-risk four-year-olds.

SUCCESS BY 6 PROMISES TO DO TODAY

Sponsors of SUCCESS BY 6 promise to do today:

- Provide education of at-risk three-and four-year-old children through a high quality, comprehensive early childhood education program.
- Reduce the number of at-risk children by at least 30%.
- Increase the number of at-risk preschoolers-
- Increase the number of at-risk preschoolers-
- Implement comprehensive early childhood programs for at-risk four-year-olds.
- Implement comprehensive early childhood programs for at-risk four-year-olds.
- Strengthen the role of parents.
- Strengthen the role of parents.
- Improve the economic condition of the young child.
- Improve the economic condition of the young child.
- Reduce the number of children inadequately prepared for school.

SUCCESS BY 6 APPEAL TO ALL:

SUCCESS BY 6 comprises all the efforts of the Coalition on behalf of Arizona’s at-risk children.

SUCCESS BY 6 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA - 1991

The $600,000 appropriation (with a $500,000 private donation) to the Arizona Department of Education in 1990 provided the first state funds for preschool programs for at-risk 4-year-olds. While this is a step toward ensuring that all Arizona’s at-risk three-and four-year-old children will have an opportunity to participate in a high quality, comprehensive early childhood program, the
CHILDREN’S ACTION ALLIANCE STAFF

We are pleased to introduce the Children’s Action Alliance staff.

CAROL KAMIN, Ph.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As Executive Director of the Children’s Action Alliance, Carol has responsibility for the overall administration and direction of CAA.

Prior to joining CAA, Carol began her career in state government working for the Department of Economic Security as Director of the Governor’s Council on Children, Youth and Families and as the State Administrator for the Administration for Children, Youth and Families. In 1996, Carol was appointed by Governor Bruce Babbitt to be the first Director of the Governor’s Office for Children’s Issues.

for Children. She subsequently worked as Assistant to Mayor Terry Goddard helping him design his human services and education agendas for the City of Phoenix. Carol holds a Ph.D. from Arizona State University in child development. Carol and her husband, Alan, have two children, Daniel and David.

PATTY BRIGGS, M.Ed., EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALIST

As the Project Director for SUCCESS BY 6, Patty is responsible for collaborating with the public and private sectors to ensure that all Arizona’s children are ready for success in school by the age of 6.

Prior to joining the CAA staff, Patty was the Assistant Director of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, the accreditation division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Washington, DC.

She received her Master’s degree in Elementary Education, with an emphasis on Early Childhood, from Arizona State University.

Patty is the proud adoptive mother of 3 1/2 year-old Drew, a native of Costa Rica.

IRENE JACOBS, M.S.W., SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR

As the individual in charge of coordinating all of the activities relating to the Arizona Children’s Campaign and Kids Count, Irene provides leadership and direction to a comprehensive statewide effort to increase public awareness about the needs of Arizona’s children through leadership development, coalition building, membership recruitment, lobbying and advocacy.

Irene has over 10 years experience in social welfare, public policy, community organizing and media relations. She has a Master’s of Social Work with an emphasis in Planning, Administration and Community Development from Arizona State University. Irene and her husband, Alford, have a baby girl, Maris.

CARYN BAUMAN, M.P.H., PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

As the staff person responsible for coordinating CAA activities as they pertain to homeless children and youth, Caryn provides direction to the CAA Task Force on Homeless Children and Youth and to the Governor’s appointed Advisory Task Force on Runaway and Homeless Youth. As part of an ongoing effort to educate professionals and community leaders, Caryn organizes the annual conference on homeless children and youth. She is also responsible for the development and editing of A Case.

Caryn’s areas of expertise are marketing, planning and policy development. She has a Master’s in Public Health with concentrations in Administration, and Maternal and Child Health from Yale University. Caryn and her husband, David, have two children, Stephanie and Zackery.

GAIL JACOBS, M.S.W., PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

As the newest member of the CAA staff, Gail assists in the planning, development and implementation of the Arizona Children’s Campaign and Kids Count grants. Gail will design and conduct community workshops to educate child advocates on the “how-to’s” of implementing the public policy recommendations emanating from these two projects. She is responsible for coalition development and media relations.

Gail has a Master’s of Social Work from Arizona State University. Gail and her husband, Thomas, have five children, Matthew, Alex, Natalie, Julianne and Cole.

RANDEE PRI-TAL, B.A., ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Ranee is responsible for providing primary staff support for the Homeless Children and Youth projects, Kids Count, and the Arizona Children’s Campaign. Prior to joining CAA, Ranee served as Administrative Assistant to the former Kid’s Juvenile Justice Committee of the Arizona State Legislature. In addition, her varied experiences include teaching preschool and kindergarten, and directing a summer camp program. Ranee and her husband Shimo, have two children, Ben and Maya.

RACHEL (RAE) SEWARD, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Rae has been with CAA since its beginning. As Executive Assistant, Rae is responsible for overseeing all administrative work for the Executive Director, the Board of Directors and Arizona’s SUCCESS BY 6 project. Rae’s superb organizational skills have served her well in coordinating CAA conferences and special events.

Rae and her husband, John, have two sons, Doug and Nick.

500 PEOPLE ATTEND CHILD ABUSE CONFERENCE

The second Statewide Conference on Child Abuse Prevention was held January 30-1, 2001, at the Pointe at Squaw Peak. Attended by almost five hundred people from all parts of Arizona, the conference was organized and coordinated by the Children’s Action Alliance.

Keynote speakers included Ann Cohn, Ph.N., National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse in Chicago; Beth Pratt and Gary Brokaw of the Hawaii Healthy Start Program, Honolulu; and Rick DeGraw, of Roots Development, Phoenix, and former President of the Children’s Action Alliance Board of Directors.

Sponsors of the conference included the Child Abuse Prevention Fund; Arizona Department of Economic Security; Arizona Chapter of the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, St. Joseph’s Hospital Governor’s Office for Children; America West Airlines; Arizona Department of Education; Arizona Department of Health Services; Maternal Child Health Division; Southwest Human Development; and Arizona Public Service.

Plans for a pilot program in Arizona, replicating the Hawaii Healthy Start Program, will be announced soon by the Child Abuse Prevention Fund and U.S. The Hawaii Healthy Start program has been successful in eliminating severe abuse and neglect in high risk families where up to fifty percent might otherwise lose their young children. The program offers screening for risk at birth, and comprehensive, home-based services (for up to five years) all across the Hawaiian islands.

Front row from left to right: Gail Jacobs, Rachel Seward, Carol Kamin and Randee Pri-Tal. Back row: Patty Briggs, Caryn Bauman and Irene Jacobs.
“BEATING THE ODDS:
MAKING A HOME FOR ARIZONA’S CHILDREN”

The Children’s Action Alliance Second Annual Conference on Homeless Children and Youth, funded by a grant from the Margaret T. Morris Foundation, will take place on Friday, April 5th at the Fiesta Inn in Tempe. In response to requests from an overwhelming majority of participants at last year’s conference, the focus of this year’s program will be on programmatic solutions to improving the lives of these children.

David Liederman, Executive Director of the Child Welfare League of America, will be the keynote speaker. Mr. Liederman has a reputation for battling the establishment from within by questioning Federal spending priorities when thousands of our children live on the streets in abject poverty.

“The Buck Stops...Where?” will be a panel discussion featuring key representatives from the public and private sectors. Representative Debbie McCune Davis and Tim Schmaltz, Assistant Director, Division of Social Services, Department of Economic Security, will speak to the responsibilities that the public sector has to eradicate homelessness.

C.E. “Pep” Cooney, President and General Manager of KPNX, Channel 12, will discuss the private sector’s role.

Senator Pete Rios, President of the Arizona State Senate, will be the luncheon speaker.

In the afternoon participants will hear about innovative programs from throughout the country from the people who run them. Professionals representing successful programs in Arizona, California, Washington, Massachusetts and New York will present seminars in the areas of housing, behavioral health, transitional living, education, and, health and nutrition.

Lisa Mihaly, of the Children’s Defense Fund in Washington, D.C. will provide the symposium wrap-up.

For registration information, please call Randee Pri-Tal at 266-0707.

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