Kids Count in Pima County

Local leaders support 1% for kids.

Thanks to the action of the City Council of Tucson and the Pima County Board of Supervisors, nearly 2,000 working families will be better off this summer and during the coming school year. Instead of going home to empty houses or wandering the streets, their children will be in supervised programs run by the city, the county, and community organizations. Some kids will participate in traditional recreation programs, some will attend tutoring programs provided by the libraries, some will attend employment readiness programs. By the year 2000 the number of children involved could be as high as 8,000, with nearly $6 million being spent for these purposes.

On April 15, Pima County adopted an ordinance which will, over four years, phase in an allocation of 1% of the county’s annual general revenue fund to children’s programs. When the ordinance is fully implemented, 1% will be approximately $3 million over and above what the county currently spends for programs for children and youth. The City of Tucson has informally committed to phasing in new funding as well, which will increase to 1% of its general fund over the next four years.

The 1% for Kids Campaign

The 1% for Kids campaign is a new approach to providing for children’s needs by setting aside a portion of a local government’s budget for children’s programs. Our experience with 1% for Kids can serve as an inspiration—and perhaps a template—for other communities in Arizona and in other states.

The 1% for Kids campaign arose from the widespread concern that the thousands of children who are unsupervised while parents work are especially vulnerable to drugs, teen pregnancy, and gangs, to say nothing of loneliness and isolation. Success By 6 Southern Arizona developed a proposed ordinance to automatically appropriate 1% of the city and county general revenue fund to before school, after school and vacation care for kids, while not reducing existing funds for such programs.

Community mobilizes for action

Over a period of two years, many members of the Success By 6 Southern Arizona committee, especially Henry Ruth and CAA Board member Patty Montiel Overall, talked about 1% for Kids with community groups, the news media, the mayor and members of the city council and county board of supervisors. 1% for Kids became a hot topic—even on talk radio!

The Tucson City Council ultimately declined to adopt the ordinance. However, they added $600,000 for more after-school programs and expressed their intention to move toward allocating the full 1% of revenues in four years. The Pima County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously for 1% for Kids at the county level.

While there is work ahead at both the city and county to ensure that the money committed for kids’ programs is actually allocated and wisely spent, we are encouraged by this demonstration of local support for Pima County’s children. For more details about 1% for Kids, please contact Penelope Jacks, Director of Success By 6 Southern Arizona at (520) 795-4199 ext 18.
Commentary

Prosperous with Rotten Outcomes: KIDS COUNT Says it All

The state's economy is up, unemployment is down, job growth is terrific, the state has millions of dollars left over from last year and hundreds of millions more set aside for a "rainy day," and tax cuts have abounded. For many Arizonans, this has meant prosperity. But, according to the latest KIDS COUNT report, this prosperity has not trickled down to hundreds of thousands of Arizona's children.

The 8th annual KIDS COUNT Data Book, published by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, shows Arizona's overall ranking of 41st worst in the nation did not come about last year, and that Arizona performed worse than average on seven out of ten indicators. (See chart on back page.) According to the report, Arizona has the 7th highest teen birthrate in the nation and the 8th highest child death rate. Although the teen dropout rate in Arizona improved by 24% between 1985 and 1994, the latest data show that Arizona ranks worst in the nation, along with four other states. And a growing portion of our children - 23%, representing nearly 215,000 children — are growing up poor, while the national child poverty rate remains stable.

We can't blame all of these poor kids and rotten outcomes on deadbeat parents or on bad schools. Three out of four poor families with children in Arizona include parents who work. According to the KIDS COUNT report, research shows that children growing up poor are more likely to be sick, be unprepared for kindergarten, fall behind and drop out of school, get into trouble with the law, become teen parents, and be unemployed.

Rotten outcomes for kids come partly through the opposition of some state policy makers and community leaders, on both economic and ideological grounds, to fill in the gaps that prevent struggling families from being able to take care of themselves and their children. These gaps include access to decent child care, health care for thousands of children of working families, a level playing field for all children in their schools, enriching opportunities for youth in non-school hours, and sufficient funding for job training programs to help families climb the economic ladder.

As described in this newsletter, the 1997 legislative session put needed patches on some of the leaks. But to turn the KIDS COUNT numbers around will require major roof repair. Of course the private and voluntary sectors have clear and important roles to play in this long-term repair. But private effort is woefully insufficient to do all we have to do to make real progress in dealing with the vast, complicated, rooted problems these kids and families face.

The question for Arizonans to ask themselves is: Are we satisfied? Is it okay that approximately 200,000 Arizona children in working families have no health coverage? Is it okay that hundreds or reports of suspected child abuse are ignored and thousands of abused and neglected children get no help due to lack of resources? Is it okay that children have different opportunities for a quality education depending on where they live? What percentage of Arizona's children are expendable? Things change when we make a commitment to change. Improving the condition of Arizona's children will surely require a renewed commitment to get involved by each and every one of us who can touch the lives of children one by one. It will also take a sustained commitment of private and public funding to long-term prevention strategies rather than quick fixes that can't possibly work.

If we can afford to allocate hundreds of millions of dollars for tax cuts and rainy day funds; and if we can afford to continue spending hundreds of millions more on punishment and on locking people up, then surely we can afford to say not just in word, but also in deed—Arizona's kids really do count.

Caroll Kanen
Executive Director
Children's Action Alliance

Board Profiles

Steve Lynn

Steve Lynn brings a diverse background to the board, including utilities management, strategic planning, hospital administration, public and community relations, government service, community and economic development, advertising, and public affairs. As Partner and Chief Executive Officer of Nordensson Lynn & Associates, Inc., in Tucson, Steve's primary area of emphasis is marketing planning and communications services.

Steve has taught at the University of Arizona and maintains a number of community board positions including the Steele Memorial Children's Research Center, Amphitheater Extension Programs, the American Association of Advertising Agencies, and the Center for Excellence in Education Advisory Board at Northern Arizona University. His strategic sophistication and creativity has been an asset to CAA since he joined our board in 1995. Steve serves as co-chair of CAA's Healthy Children Arizona Committee.

Nora Hannah

Nora is president of Landiscor Aerial Information, a national aerial photography firm headquartered in Phoenix with offices in seven cities throughout the southwest. Prior to coming to Landiscor, Nora held a number of senior positions in finance and real estate management. She is a certificated public accountant and a licensed real estate agent.

Nora is active in the community, having served two consecutive terms as president of the YWCA of Maricopa County Board of Directors. She currently serves on the Valley Leadership Board of Directors and is a member of the Arizona State University Corporate Leaders Advisory Board. CAA has benefited from Nora's knowledge of business management and her chairing of the CAA Investment Committee.

INSIDE CAA

The last eight months have brought a number of changes to CAA. At the end of last year, we bid a fond farewell to Mark Barnes and Jannah Scott. This month we also say goodbye to Gail Jacobs and Lorraine Mercado, who, with six and seven years at CAA respectively, have helped to make us the organization we are today. We wish all of them the best of luck as they forge their new career paths.

We are pleased to extend a warm welcome to new staff members:

Elizabeth Hudgins joined us as Research Analyst last November. Elizabeth's experience evaluating welfare to work programs has prepared her well for analyzing the impact of Arizona's welfare reform.

Beth Rosenberg comes to Children's Action Alliance as Child Welfare Project Director after fifteen years experience with the Department of Economic Security, concentrating in child welfare, child care, and welfare reform.

Giff Loza's nine years of management experience at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center and fifteen years experience working with programs for children with disabilities in Arizona provide an excellent foundation for his position as CAA's new Health Policy Project Director.

Kim Williamson recently joined us as Director of Development and Internal Operations. Kim has held a variety of development positions with the Children's Cancer Center and the Tempe Center for Habilitation.

We would also like to express our appreciation to Lisa Cherry who recently completed an internship with us through the Arizona State University School of Social Work.

CAA extends congratulations to the new President of our Board of Directors, Dan Schweiker, CEO of China Mist Tea. We also welcome the newest member of our Board, Steve Roman, Senior Vice President of Bank One of Arizona.
**Casey Family Program Joins Margaret T. Morris Foundation Supporting Community Mobilization**

The Casey Family Program of Seattle, Washington recently awarded Children's Action Alliance a grant to support community mobilization and policy research to better protect Arizona's children from abuse and neglect. These resources, along with grant funds from the Margaret T. Morris Foundation of Prescott, support Arizona's for Safe Kids. With this grassroots organization of volunteers from across the state and CAA's Child Welfare Committee, CAA will conduct research and a series of public forums, focus groups, and surveys. This information will be used to develop recommendations and implementation strategies to improve the lives of Arizona's most vulnerable children.

For more information about Arizona's for Safe Kids, please contact Beth Rosenberg at (602) 260-0707.

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**Two Steps Forward, One Step Back for Abused and Neglected Children**

**Family Builders Pilot Program**

State legislators established an innovative pilot program to help protect children from abuse and neglect. HB 2256 appropriates $3 million for a two-year pilot program that establishes an alternative response system to help children and families who have been reported to child protective services for minor abuse or neglect. Last year, 1,400 of these types of reports were left uninvestigated due to the lack of resources. In the first six months of the program's operation community organizations will be able to respond to 127 reports, offering concrete and friendly help to families who choose to participate.

The bill succeeded with active community support and the bipartisan leadership of Senator Ruth Solomon, Representative Freddy Hershberger and other legislators including Senators David Petersen, Gary Richardson and Sue Grace, and Representative Laura Knaparek. Arizona will now have new tools to heed family warning signs and to prevent bubbling struggles from boiling over into family tragedies.

**Process Improvements for Children in the CPS System**

Lawmakers also passed legislation to clarify numerous child welfare laws and to expedite the process of moving abused and neglected children into permanent homes. Research and experience tell us that the time it takes to place a child in a safe, permanent home can make the difference in whether or not that child develops into a responsible, contributing adult.

HB 2235, a joint effort spearheaded by Representative Freddy Hershberger, Senator Ruth Solomon and the governor, speeds up the time frames for court proceedings for children in the care and custody of the state and specifies clear criteria for making decisions about children's care. The bill came to life through the efforts of Judge Nanette Warner of Tucson, who chaired an ad hoc legislative subcommittee on child protective services issues.

**Continued Funding Shortfalls**

Unfortunately, a severe lack of funding will continue to impede state and community efforts to protect abused and neglected children. Thanks to the determined leadership of Senators John Wetwaw, David Petersen, and Sue Grace, the state budget added twenty-two additional child protective services staff to investigate reports of abuse and neglect and to work with children and families when investigations confirm the reports.

But this increased capacity is only half the amount the Department of Economic Security requested to keep up with growing caseloads.-Caseworkers will still be responsible for more children than they can manage, and hundreds of reports of suspected abuse will be ignored. While the number of children in foster care grew by 28% between the beginning of fiscal year 1996 and the beginning of fiscal year 1997, the legislature increased appropriated funding to help these children by only 8% for next fiscal year. And adoptions of children with special needs may be delayed because the budget to help pay for the cost of their care was cut by $2 million.

Until we have enough child protective services staff and sufficient funds for services for foster children and adopted children, progress in improving our protection of children will be limited.

For more information on child welfare issues, please contact Beth Rosenberg at (602) 260-0707.

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**New Brain Research Draws National Attention**

Everyone's talking about it. Newsweek magazine devotes a special issue to it. The President and First Lady host a White House Conference to draw attention to it. And, a prime time television program hosted by Tom Hanks and produced by Rob Reiner features it.

Who would believe that the "it" is the new and not-so-new brain research that conclusively shows that how children function from their preschool years all the way through adolescence and adulthood hinges in large part on their experiences before the age of three?

As we institute policies and practices that affect the day-to-day experiences of Arizona's youngest children, the stakes are very high. Parents, no matter how well-intentioned and how hard they're trying, can't do this job alone -- especially given the hectic pace of today's pressure-packed society.

Although supporting parents is a "no-brainer," most of our communities are flunking in one critical area. One national study recently revealed that only 8% of care for infants and toddlers in child care centers was developmentally appropriate, and 40% of infant and toddler rooms in child care centers actually endanger children's health and safety.

We know that the consequences of neglect are staggering. Scientists tell us that in these first years, a child's ability to learn can increase or decrease by 25% or more depending on the quality and quantity of attention the child receives.

There are many public and private efforts that are working in Arizona to help parents understand the importance of the first few years and to make sure their babies receive the kind of attention they need. The Success By 6 legislation, passed in 1994, includes two programs called Health Start and Healthy Families, that help pregnant mothers and struggling new parents meet the challenges of these first years.

Success By 6 programs work by providing practical, non-bureaucratic help and support to parents in their own homes so that they can better nurture and care for their babies.

The challenge before Arizona is clear. On the one hand, there have been incredible advances and greater understanding of how a child develops to his or her full potential. On the other hand, we know that the gap between this knowledge and the real lives of far too many of our youngest children is enormous. Will we have the political and community will to bridge this gap? The stakes could not be higher.

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**CAA Friends Celebrate Successes for Children**

Children's Action Alliance celebrated its ninth birthday at our annual meeting and reception on March 13, 1997 at the University Club garden, accompanied by the soothing strains of the Mountain View High School String Quartet. CAA honored Dr. Mary Rimsen, one of Arizona's foremost experts in child abuse detection, with the Horace Steele Child Advocacy Award for her vision and leadership as an advocate for children.
Arizona Voters Push Lawmakers to Act: Health Care on the Way to More Arizona Families

Through initiatives passed in 1994 and 1996, Arizona voters have created two extraordinary opportunities to extend needed health insurance to thousands of uninsured children and their families.

**Pilot program to help pay for health insurance**

The tobacco tax passed in 1994 generates more than $80 million each year to provide health care coverage to low-income children and their families. Over the past two years, the legislature has allocated a portion of these funds to establish and enhance primary care programs that serve children without either private insurance or an AHCCCS coverage.

This year, the legislature also established a three-year pilot program to help low-income, working families afford health insurance. HB 2467 passed through the bipartisan efforts of Representatives Laura Knaparel, Herschella Horton, and Jim Weiers. The bill uses $20 million in tobacco tax funds each year to pay a portion of the health care premiums for a limited number of Arizona families in four counties who earn less than 200% of the federal poverty level (approximately $26,000 for a family of three). Participating families will pay a monthly premium as well as co-payments for health care coverage through the AHCCCS program.

This positive step will bring health insurance to a maximum of 20,000 of the approximately 400,000 uninsured children and adults in our state.

**Implementation of Proposition 203 still in planning stages**

In the 1996 election, Arizona voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 203, called the Healthy Arizona Initiative. Spearheaded by Representative Andy Nichols, the initiative has two prongs: first, extending health care coverage to all Arizona children who earn less than the federal poverty level (approximately $12,000 for a family of three), and, second, allocating $17 million of lottery funds to support several family prevention programs.

The first prong requires a waiver from the federal government. State officials are preparing the request for the waiver for submission this month. Assuming the waiver is granted, the governor and the Health Committee Chairwomen Representative Susan Gerard and Senator Ann Day are tentatively planning a special legislative session for August to pass the legislation that will put the initiative into effect.

The second prong of the Healthy Arizona Initiative has been delayed due to competition for limited lottery funds. Several legislative amendments were proposed during the session by Representatives Robin Shaw, Debra Brinshall, Andy Nichols, and Senator Keith Bee to secure the distribution of lottery funds to the Healthy Arizona programs. Unfortunately, the amendment ultimately adopted leaves the programs with no lottery funding this year and little or no funding next year. This issue may also be addressed during the special legislative session.

Without further action, Arizonans will not see the enhanced investments they want for health care services including AHCCCS health care coverage, Healthy Families, a child abuse prevention effort; Health Start, an outreach program to promote prenatal care and immunizations; the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program; and teen pregnancy prevention efforts. Voters must continue to speak up so that we do not once again put the health of children and families on hold.

Arizona's Welfare Reform: the Good, the Bad, and Things to Worry About

One of the biggest issues of the legislative session was welfare reform. The new federal welfare reform law, signed by the president last August handed state legislatures two immediate challenges: figure out how to spend two new block grants to best help needy families and figure out how to get at least 25% of the adults receiving welfare into jobs right away.

The Arizona House and Senate took very different approaches to moving people off the welfare rolls. The final legislation (SB 1357) enacts the Senate approach as a pilot privatization program in Mesa, Tempe, and Chandler. The House approach, called EMPOWER Redesign, is enacted in the rest of the state.

**The Good News**

EMPOWER Redesign (developed by the Department of Economic Security and the governor, and spearheaded by Representatives Carolyn Allen and Mark Anderson) alters the welfare process to assist clients in finding employment from the beginning. Many believed this business seriously and put dollars behind their rhetoric about moving people from welfare to work.

Through persistent advocacy efforts and the bipartisan leadership of Representatives Carolyn Allen, John Loredro, Rebecca Rios, and Sue Lynch, $26 million has been added for child care assistance so that families can look for jobs, get jobs, and stay working. Child care and foster care assistance for low-income working families have been raised so that more families who earn $10,000 to $18,000 a year can afford safe and reliable child care.

Legislators also allocated additional funds for education and job training services so that welfare recipients can qualify for better paying jobs, as well as funding for transportation assistance to help some people get to work. Families who get jobs and go off welfare will continue to receive health care coverage and child care assistance for up to two years while they get back on their feet.

**The Bad News**

Despite the recognition that families need job training and education, transportation and child care to get jobs and stay working, the funding falls far short of what is needed. Poor families, for example, may end up on waiting lists for child care assistance and be forced to choose between their jobs and the safety of their children.

There was no good reason to skim on funding for these items—which are critical to meeting the work requirements set by the U.S. Congress. The adopted budget actually reduced state spending for welfare programs by $32 million over two years—funding that could have been well used to help struggling families instead of cutting taxes for well-off families or building up the state’s rainy day fund.

The pilot program, called Arizona Works and spearheaded by Senator Tom Patterson, turns the entire welfare program over to one private company. The pilot is overseen by a small, appointed board which is exempt from the state’s normal procurement laws that protect against fraud and abuse. The work requirements of the pilot program are poorly designed so that families participating in the pilot could be worse off than families in the rest of the state, and could be forced to work in community service jobs for far less than minimum wage.

**What’s Left to Worry About**

Changing the way things are done is always marked by trial and error, and it is clear that welfare reform will be a continuing issue. There are three questions to ask as this legislation is implemented.

First, are there enough jobs? Both EMPOWER Redesign and Arizona Works are based on the premise of moving people off welfare. If it turns out that the jobs aren’t there, or the welfare recipients can’t qualify for the jobs that are there, we need to rethink the plan.

Second, what is happening to families once they leave the welfare rolls, due to finding jobs or hitting time limits? Thanks to the persistent efforts of Senator George Cunningham and Representative John Loredro, SB 1357 requires the Department of Economic Security to distribute an annual report examining how long people stay in jobs, what they earn, and whether or not their families have health care and child care.

Third, which works better, EMPOWER Redesign or Arizona Works? The legislation requires an evaluation and comparison of the two programs to determine which is more effective.
### 1997 KIDS COUNT Data Book: How Does Arizona Compare?

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<th>Arizona Rate</th>
<th>U.S. Rate</th>
<th>Arizona Rank</th>
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<td>Percent low birth-weight babies</td>
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<td>Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)</td>
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<td>Child death rate (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14)</td>
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<td>Rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide and suicide (deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19)</td>
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