The signing of Arizona's KidsCare legislation gives us all something to smile about. When the program goes into effect, more than 60,000 uninsured children in working families will be able to get health care coverage each year. They will grow up healthier. They can see a dentist regularly. Their school work won’t have to be disrupted by untreated pain and illness. They won’t be forced to use expensive emergency room services for minor problems. And their parents won’t miss work because small problems escalated into crises.

KidsCare is a non-Medicare health insurance program with three quarters of the funding from a federal block grant to Arizona and one quarter from the state's tobacco tax fund. Uninsured children who are not eligible for AHCCCS can enroll in KidsCare if their family income is below 150% of the federal poverty level the first year ($24,725 for a family of four) and below 200% of the federal poverty level in subsequent years (almost $33,000 for a family of four). AHCCCS will administer the system through contracts with private insurance plans. Families can choose insurance coverage with the same benefits available to state employees, including dental care and limited behavioral health services. Or families can use qualified health clinics on a subsidized, pay-per-visit basis.

A STORY WITH MANY HEROES

The final KidsCare legislation passed by a vote of 20 to 6 in the State Senate and 50 to 7 in the House of Representatives. But this overwhelming support and the near unanimous smiles of legislators at the bill-signing ceremony don’t tell the real story of KidsCare.

The truth is that KidsCare was a hard-won victory. The victory was possible only because more than 300 community groups, parents, businesses and business organizations, elected leaders, doctors, and individuals from all over the state all spoke out for children. In the end, KidsCare passed thanks to the strength of the unusual coalition of Arizona’s leading business groups and child advocates; thanks to the persistence of parents and doctors; and thanks to the dedicated leadership of Governor Jane Hull, health committee chairs, Representative Susan Gerard and Senator Ann Day, and other committed legislators. Without this combined effort, KidsCare would have sunk into the mud of misinformation, inaction, and ideological guile.

THE EPILOGUE

AHCCCS has submitted Arizona’s KidsCare plan to the federal Health Care Financing Administration. The program will go into effect upon federal approval, probably very late in 1998 or very early in 1999. The next chapter is the operational design of KidsCare. Working together with AHCCCS, all the KidsCare heroes can help make sure that working parents know about the program. We can help make sure that enrollment is not difficult and that KidsCare is coordinated with other health care programs.

Thanks to the financial support of the Murphy Memorial Fund of St. Luke’s Charitable Health Trust and the Armstrong Family Foundation of the Arizona Community Foundation, and a partnership with St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center, Children’s Action Alliance will continue to work with elected officials, state agencies, parents, health care organizations, and community groups to close the gap in children’s health care coverage. We look forward to celebrating more happy endings.

For more information or for a summary of the KidsCare legislation, please call Peggy Steenlander at (602) 266-0707.
Arizona ranks a dismal 42nd in the nation on key indicators of child well-being. Although our state leads the nation in job growth and tax cuts, we also lead the nation in child poverty, teen death, high school dropout rates, births to teens, and children with no health insurance. There are no excuses.

We all need to get out and vote, do some legwork, and ask questions of candidates that reflect the real life concerns of parents, grandparents, and anxious Arizonans. We need to tell candidates for public office that existing baby is not enough.

Make use of CAAs Who’s for Kids? brochure that gives facts and questions to ask candidates about their position. [Call John Jeff Scott (602)616-0702 to get a copy. Expect candidates to be true champions for children before they get your vote.

I have been privileged to be part of the CAA family for the past ten years. With your help, and beginning with the election of 1998, may the next ten years see the realization of our common vision of opening wide the doors of opportunity for each and every Arizona child.

Success By 6: Ongoing funding for the Health Start, Healthy Families, and Family Literacy prevention programs could have been included in agency continuation budgets. A 20-year cooperative agreement funding was transferred in with a pile of new programs to fight for space in the budget box. Legislative leaders decided there was not enough room for more programs. The funding for Health Start, a proven prenatal outreach program, was eliminated. Thanks to the determined efforts of Senator Sue Grace, Healthy Families was continued at level funding of $3 million and Family Literacy was continued at level funding of $1 million.

Child Abuse and Neglect: There was opposition to the model court legislation to expand a successful Pima County program statewide. The program speeds up the court processing time to move abused and neglected children into permanent homes sooner. Sponsored by Senator Ruth Solomon and Representative Fred Houghton, the legislation passed. But the funding was dramatically reduced because the budget box was too small. As a result, there will be shortages of staff support to implement the legislation.

KidsCare: Legislation creating a new children’s health insurance program for uninsured children in low-income working families passed, thanks to Governor Hull’s leadership, committed legislators, and broad community support. During the last few days of the session, they argued about how to squeeze all that remained — from juvenile prisons, to air quality measures to a space flight center to state office buildings to prevention programs — into the shrinking budget box that was left. This was that children’s initiatives with vocal support were cut in half. When the bills were thrown from the box altogether.

When it came time to set priorities for improving lives and lives chances for Arizona’s children, the box became the deciding factor. If it could be funded from somewhere other than the state general fund, then, if not, eliminate it completely. This has now happened. Here’s how the five major items on the Children’s Action Alliance agenda fared.

Welfare Reform: Also thanks to Representative Mark Anderson, John Loreda, Carolyn Allen, and Herschella Horton, more low-income working families will get help with transportation and job training so that they can stay off welfare and work their way out of poverty. None of this progress would have been possible without federal welfare reform block grants. State general fund spending on welfare continues to decline. Future decisions about how to divide up state and federal welfare funds between the privatization pilot and the rest of the state will have dramatic consequences for Arizona’s most vulnerable children.

Next year’s legislative session could shape up to be quite the same way. The projected ending balance for the state general fund on June 30, 1999, is only $13 million and school finance will consume hundreds of millions of dollars from the general fund each year. What can we do to improve our chances for legislative action that benefits children and families?

First, we can elect leaders this September who will put children at the top of their agenda.

Second, we can convince the leaders we do elect to examine and balance all the fiscal decisions at the same time instead of saving important spending decisions until the end after the walls of the budget box have been nailed shut.

Third, we can hold elected leaders accountable for their decisions and expect them to stand behind the priorities they set. They can’t say that they support help for kids if only the money were there, after they made sure the money wasn’t there.

Next year, we simply can’t take “box” for an answer.

For more information on Legislative and budget issues affecting children, call John Jeff Scott at (602)616-0702 or visit our web site at www.caarizona.org.
David A. Howell has been a member of CAA's Board of Directors since 1994. As Vice President of Corporate Communications for Bank of America in Phoenix, Dave oversees internal and external communications, charitable giving and community service programs for the bank in Arizona.

Prior to joining Bank of America in 1993, Dave spent twenty years as a television journalist in Phoenix and Atlanta, with honors including an Emmy Award from the Atlanta chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 1985, and multiple Emmy nominations for his work in both Atlanta and Phoenix. Dave was named the outstanding news director in the Phoenix market in 1990, 1991 and 1992 by the Phoenix Chapter of American Women in Radio and Television.

Dave earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Dave serves on the board of directors of the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Association, the Phoenix Library Foundation, and the Valley of the Sun United Way.

Dave brings both his communications talents and his strategic fundraising expertise to CAA as chair of the board's development committee.

Nadine Mathis is a founder and President of Summa Associates, a consulting firm that assists businesses with child care and elder care services for their employees. Nadine has consulted with a variety of employers in the profit, non-profit and public sectors.

Before beginning her consulting work, Nadine taught and directed education programs in both public and private elementary schools and preschools. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of Kansas and a master's degree in early childhood education from Arizona State University.

Nadine was recently recognized for her exceptional work in early childhood education with Arizona State University's Distinguished Achievement Award and with a Woman of Distinction Award from the East Valley Assistance League. Her expertise in business was acknowledged by a presidential appointment to the White House Conference on Small Business.

Nadine is a founding board member of CAA. Over the past ten years, she has contributed her leadership in a multitude of ways to improve the quality of life for Arizona's children. CAA was proud to honor her as a Champion for Children at our tenth anniversary annual meeting (see page 7).

NEW BOARD FACES

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members to our Board of Directors:

Peggy Stemmler joined CAA in June as a new position, Program Associate for Communications and Special Projects. Peggy is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and a pediatrician. Her past professional experience with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and the Maternity Medical Center helped her join the KidsCare effort at full speed.

Paula Carvallo joined our staff as an Administrative Assistant in May. Paula brings ten years of outstanding organizational and computer skills from her work with the Ministry for Persons with Disabilities at the Roman Catholic Church.

Jeffrey L. Schade joined CAA in June as a new position, Program Associate for Communications and Special Projects. Jeff received his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Arizona in May. He has already accumulated communications and advocacy experience as an intern in community relations at the United Way of Greater Tucson.

NATION EXPERTS SAY HEALTHY FAMILIES CAN PREVENT VIOLENCE

At a January breakfast seminar, Dr. James Garbarino talked with Arizona elected officials, business executives and community leaders about the link between early childhood experiences and crime and violence in our communities. Garbarino, Director of the Family Life Development Center at Cornell University, is a nationally renowned expert. He said that both theory and research point to family support programs like Arizona's Healthy Families as the single best effort to reduce violence.

CAA sponsored the breakfast seminar in conjunction with the Phoenix Violence Prevention Initiative and with support from Honeywell. A panel of state leaders said that Arizona is ready for action: Alfredo Gutierrez, President of Janison & Gutierrez; Dr. Daniel Kessler, Director of Behavioral and Developmental Pediatrics at St. Joseph's Medical Center; Attorney General Grant Woods; and Superintendent of Public Instruction, Lisa Kegum.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM CHILDREN'S ACTION ALLIANCE

MAJOR 1998 LEGISLATION AFFECTING CHILDREN'S SAFETY

Who's for Kids and Who's Just Kidding brochure with questions for candidates

State of Arizona's Children's 1997 report profiling trends in risks for Arizona's children ($10 charge)

Welfare Reform Watch overview of Arizona's welfare reform policies

CHILDREN ARE LISTENING: Conversations for Their Future proceedings of the statewide focus on abused, neglected and abandoned children

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

CHILDREN'S ACTION ALLIANCE

We are proud to announce the creation of CAA's Honorary Board of Directors. The pioneering members of the new board are past CAA Board Presidents Rick DeGraw and Mark DeMichele, and Horace W. Steele Child Advocacy Award recipient Beulah Bush, Dr. Kipp Charlton, Mike Bielecki, Chip Weil, Dr. Mary Rinsma, and the Honorable John Foreman.

We support families in growing together. The Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsa highlighted the importance of quality child care to his own family and the whole community. And Governor Fife Syme issued a proclamation declaring June 1998 as quality child care month.
WHO’S FOR KIDS & WHO’S JUST KIDDING?

This fall, Arizonans will elect all 90 state legislators, all 6 representatives in congress, a U.S. senator, and statewide officials including governor, secretary of state, and attorney general. You can make your vote count for Arizona’s children.

- Call us for a copy of our election brochure that includes facts and questions to ask candidates about their positions for children.
- Call us for a list of candidates.
- Attend candidate forums. Call and e-mail candidates. Write letters.
- Expect candidates to be true champions for children before they get your vote.

- Call us to invite a CAA staff member to speak to your organization about what votes can mean for kids.
- Remember to vote! The primary election is Tuesday, September 8. The general election is Tuesday, November 3.

- Mark your calendar for an exciting gubernatorial forum on children’s issues sponsored by Children’s Action Alliance and the Arizona Cactus-Pine Girl Scout Council, Inc.
Thursday, October 15 at the Orpheum Theatre in Phoenix.
For early reservations, call Jeff Schrade at (602) 266-0707.

For information on how to make your vote count for kids, call Jeff Schrade at 602-266-0707.

YOU CAN VOTE FROM THE CONVENIENCE OF YOUR OWN HOME. COMPLETE THE FORM ON PAGE 7. MAIL IT BACK TO CAA AND YOU WILL RECEIVE YOUR BALLOT IN THE MAIL.

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