STATE LAWMAKERS PLANTED SEEDS OF SUCCESS FOR ARIZONA’S CHILDREN

With two-year budget decisions and a range of new laws, the 1999 state legislative session planted seeds of success for Arizona’s children. As voters clearly and consistently called for more attention on public education and the needs of parents and children, lawmakers responded by planting a number of initiatives that have the potential to grow into valuable resources for Arizona’s families.

PREVENTION

Under the leadership of Governor Hull, the state budget includes an expansion of the successful Healthy Families prevention program from $3 million to $5 million in fiscal year 2001. The increased funding will bring the program to more communities throughout the state to strengthen families, prevent child abuse and neglect, improve children’s health, and increase parents’ self-sufficiency.

Lawmakers restored funding for Health Start which had been eliminated last year in spite of its proven success in helping moms keep babies healthy. Championed by Senator Sue Grace and Representative Laura Knaparek, this prenatal outreach and health education program will receive $700,000 in fiscal year 2000 and $1.2 million in fiscal year 2001.

After much hard work by Chris Fickas at the Child Crisis Center and Senator Tom Freestone, legislation was also enacted to create a special child abuse prevention license plate with a majority of the fee directed toward child abuse prevention and awareness.

HELP FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Governor Hull and Representative Mark Anderson continue to lead the effort to invest welfare block grant funds in tools for families. Working parents will have more options for quality, affordable child care as a result of increased child care subsidy rates and supplemental subsidies for accredited child care centers.

Thanks to efforts led by Representative Susan Gerard, Senator Chris Cummiskey, and Senator Sue Grace, more parents will be able to get health care coverage for their children. This year’s legislation speeds the expansion of KidsCare eligibility up to 200% of the federal poverty level beginning October 1, 1999 (about $32,000 annual income for a family of 4).

SAFE AND PERMANENT HOMES

Senator David Peterson focused on helping abused and neglected children find safe, permanent, and nurturing homes through legislation that improves and streamlines adoption procedures.

Thanks to the leadership of Senators Ruth Solomon and David Petersen and Representative Mark Anderson, youth who are homeless will also have more opportunities. New legislation provides $400,000 to help homeless youth with safe housing, education, life skills, and employment. And more children will find permanent homes through legislation that provides financial assistance to parents who assume permanent guardianship of foster children.

EDUCATION

The efforts of Representative Carolyn Allen and a coalition of moderate Democrats and Republicans resulted in new resources for public education over and above what is needed to cover inflation and student growth. Schools can use these much-needed funds to hire new teachers, help children with special needs, train teachers, upgrade classroom technology, and implement other strategies to help kids succeed in school.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

As any gardener knows, planting these seeds is just the first step. They will need tending and weeding and nutrients before they can bloom into bright opportunities for children and families.

The actions of parents and business leaders, of religious and neighborhood groups, and of voters concerned about kids will determine whether these legislative actions will grow and thrive. By voicing expectations for smaller class sizes in public schools, safe and permanent homes for abused and neglected children, higher quality choices for preschool and after-school programs, and health coverage for all children, we can truly change the landscape of Arizona’s future.
COMMENTS

Each year, when the Annie E. Casey Foundation publishes the KIDS COUNT Data Book ranking Arizona for below other states on the conditionality of young people, the story of protests questioning the statistics and arguing that things in Arizona really aren’t so bad. (See chart on page 4.) The protests come in a variety of forms. Some attack the accuracy of census figures. Others dismiss the importance of Arizona’s dismal performance saying it merely reflects our large population of Hispanics and Native Americans. Some say the numbers simply can’t be true because thousands of families continue to move from here to other states. And others try to cut off any debate about action by laying all blame and responsibility in the laps of parents.

These arguments and protests are, in fact, just what they appear to be — excuses, denials, and justifications for taking no action. But there is no excuse for letting Arizona’s kids grow up with such tremendous risks to their safety and their future. In the end, the facts speak for themselves.

Can Arizona’s taxpayers afford to do more for children? Yes. While income per person in Arizona ranked 35th in 1997, public spending on education ranked 49th. While taxes were cut by 6 billion during the 1990s, state spending per person on health and human services fell by more than 17% (adjusted for inflation).

Do conditions for kids in Arizona simply follow national trends? No. In the most recent KIDS COUNT statistics, Arizona performed worse than average on all indicators except low birth weight. While Arizona’s infant mortality rate, child and teen death rates, and school dropout rates all got better between 1985 and 1995, the improvements in Arizona fell short of national improvements. While the national child poverty rate declined 5% between 1985 and 1995, Arizona’s child poverty rate rose 24%. Arizona’s trends were worse than national trends on all indicators except low birthweight babies.

Are teen births and teen pregnancy rates better or worse than a decade ago? Worse. Both Arizona’s rate of teen pregnancy and teen births were much higher in 1996 than they were in 1985. The good news is that both teen pregnancy rates and teen birth rates have been falling since then. Arizona’s long way to go to bring our teen birthrate down to the national average.

Do kids in Arizona fare well compared to kids in other diverse, western states? No. While it may not be meaningful to compare Arizona to states with different populations like New Hampshire and North Dakota, the KIDS COUNT Data Book provides comparisons to states that have populations like ours, to states that compete with us for resources — employers and workers and tourism. In that comparison, Arizona still looks like a risky place to grow up. Arizona ranks 48th overall and New Mexico ranks 48th, but Nevada (36), Colorado (16), Texas (8) and California (31) all do better. As a teen birthrate, California ranks 28th on the teen birthrate, California ranks 29th on the dropout rate, and Nevada ranks 11th on child poverty — all surpassing Arizona. Clearly, demography is not destiny and we can not explain our problems by pointing to our minority and immigrant populations.

BOARD PROFILES

Armando Flores is Executive Vice President of Corporate Business Services of Arizona Public Service Co. (APS). His responsibilities include a broad range of corporate support services including information technology, procurement, human resources, and communications. Prior to joining APS in 1991, he held several key positions at Levi Strauss & Co. and Anheuser-Busch Co. in California. Armando brings a wealth of managerial and personal skills and his clear enjoyment of people to his professional work as well as to a wide array of civic activities. His civic involvement exemplifies his personal commitment to building strong families and strong communities. He serves on ASU’s Dean’s Council for the College of Education and the boards of the Valley of the Sun United Way, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the YWCA, and Kroati, which provides internships for young people. He was recently appointed by Governor Hull to the Arizona Works Procurement Board, charged with overseeing a groundbreaking project in welfare reform. Soon after joining the CAA Board in 1998, Armando enthusiastically took on the chairmanship of Project Family, working to address economic issues facing Hispanic families and children in Arizona.

Armando earned a Master of Arts degree in counseling/personal management. He lives with his wife Debra in Scottsdale with their two children.

Amy Carillo worked for The Arizona Republic for 15 years, in both news and marketing. During that time she developed new sections for readers, innovative connections between print and other information products, and new newspaper sections to attract both readers and advertisers. Amy recently embarked on a career change. She left the newspaper business to devote more time to the retail garden tool and ornament business that she bought for the past year. When she’s not working, Amy spends time with her husband, Bill, and their daughter, Lilli. She serves as a weekly volunteer in Lilli’s classroom in downtown Phoenix. She is also a governing board member of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and The Family School.

Amy has been a CAA Board member since 1997. With her extensive knowledge of media operations, she provides practical advice on communications. She supports the work of CAA with great personal commitment, common sense, and creativity. Amy holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Kansas. She has lived in Phoenix for 17 years.

INSIDE CAA

Children’s Action Alliance kids farewell to Brad Brooker, Delores Gorza, and Paula Wright. Brad leaves Arizona this month to attend law school at American University in Washington, DC. Delores left CAA in May as a new career opportunity in retail. Paula began a new job as a Program Specialist for the Department of Economic Security. Good luck in your new endeavors!

Children’s Action Alliance welcomes new staff members: Rhonda Cooley jumped right into CAA activities last month as our new Recruitment Officer. With her work experience at a large low firm, she brings great skill at handling a multitude of phone lines, files, and mailings with efficiency and finesse. Darrell Wright joined CAA in May as Business Manager. A Phoenix native, Darrell earned a degree in business management from the University of Phoenix. He worked for three years as Community Education Coordinator for the Crehighton Elementary School District. Darrell will devote his outstanding organizational and interpersonal skills to CAA’s administrative operations and financial management. He will also work with Rhian on fund development.

CAA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOARD:

Andy Huwitz is a partner at the law firm Osborn Maledon, specializing in appellate, government and commercial litigation. Andy has served on the Arizona Board of Regents and is a past member of the Arizona Governor’s Council for Children. He is also an Arizona Governor’s Bruce Babbitt and Rose Mofford.

Anne Smith, known as Dinky by her friends, is co-founder of the art firm Bordeaux & Company. She is past chairman of the board of the Valley of the Sun YMCA, and serves on the board of directors of the state’s largest health care system, Samaritan Health Services.

NEW BOARD OFFICERS ELECTED

Congratulations to the 1999/2000 CAA Executive Committee members elected at the annual meeting in March: Nancie Mathis-Booth, President; David Boyd, Vice President; Steve Lynn, Treasurer; Jacqueline Steiner, Secretary; Don Schonder, Past President; and Steve Romanc and Barbara Poll, members at large.

YOUR CONTRIBUTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Children’s Action Alliance relies on the financial support of people like you to change the lives of children who face overwhelming odds. It is only through your generous contributions that we are able to provide the staff, the communication, and the networks, so that children don’t get lost in the shuffle of campaign promises and legislative battles.

Please join our efforts by mailing your check today in the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. Your support makes an enormous difference.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH BOOSTS KIDSCARE

Since November 1, 1998, more than 13,400 children have enrolled in KidsCare, Arizona’s health coverage for uninsured children in working families. An additional 12,500 children who applied for coverage have been enrolled in AHCCCS, Arizona’s Medicaid program. These numbers are growing because individuals, businesses, and community groups are making an effort to publicize KidsCare and to help families apply. Public awareness about KidsCare has been boosted by a wide variety of community efforts, such as:

- Newspaper ads, designed and donated by Nordensson Lynn, have been printed in newspapers in Yuma, Casa Grande, and many school newspapers.
- 1 million KidsCare flyers were printed and donated by Bashas’ to be distributed to every public school student in the state.
- MAC America is sponsoring a series of television public service announcements to air in Phoenix.
- The Southern Arizona KidsCare Coalition created and distributed television public service announcements to air in the Tucson area.
- Kiwanis for Kids has sponsored billboards designed by Nordensson Lynn to be displayed in both Spanish and English throughout the Tucson area.
- CAA created and distributed 10,000 brochures to social service agencies statewide so that they can help parents find the health insurance their children need.

All of these efforts are helping to get dental care and health care to children who need it. To find out how you can help, contact Peggy Stemer at (602)366-0707 or stemer@azchildren.org.

PARENTS DESCRIBE BARRIERS TO AHCCCS

It is estimated that 70,000 uninsured children in Arizona are eligible for AHCCCS health care coverage but are not enrolled. Previously, policymakers could only speculate why so many children in Arizona—and throughout the nation—remain uninsured despite the availability of free health care coverage. But CAA’s recent groundbreaking research identifies the barriers that prevent parents from enrolling their children in AHCCCS. Through a partnership with St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center and through support from the Murphy Memorial, a fund of St. Luke’s Charitable Health Trust, CAA conducted 11 focus groups with 117 parents across the state.

In the focus group discussions, parents described in concrete terms their personal experiences and their perceptions that discouraged them from going through the AHCCCS enrollment process. While these parents clearly value health care coverage for their children, they consistently and repeatedly described three major barriers to AHCCCS enrollment:

- Excessive, intrusive and complicated paperwork
- Time-consuming and burdensome appointment procedures
- Demanding interactions with eligibility staff

CAA’s report, Children Without Health Insurance: Listening to Arizona’s Parents, describes these barriers and identifies potential solutions, such as allowing a mail-in application and clarifying documentation requirements. State officials from the Governor’s office, the Department of Economic Security (which administers the AHCCCS eligibility process), and AHCCCS have all expressed interest in making the process less overwhelming to parents. Changes are already underway to streamline the application process, provide flexible hours for appointments, and allow a longer period between eligibility appointments for families who are receiving health insurance and no other benefits.

Parents who participated in the focus groups agreed that simple changes like these could make a big difference. By updating the AHCCCS enrollment process with these parents in mind, we can continue to close the gap in children’s health care coverage.

For more information or a copy of the report, contact Peggy Stemer at stemer@azchildren.org or (602)366-0707.

CAROL KAMIN HONORED WITH NATIONAL AWARD

CAA Executive Director, Carol Kamin, received the Florette Angel Memorial Child Advocacy Award at a luncheon ceremony in Phoenix last month. The award is given by the National Association of Child Advocates annually to an executive director whose exemplary leadership has effectively championed the needs of children. Carol was selected for this year’s award by an independent national committee of elected officials and philanthropic and media leaders who recognized her passion, determination, integrity, and skill in child advocacy.

The award was presented to Carol by Nadine Mohis Basha, current President of the CAA Board of Directors and one of the founders of CAA eleven years ago. CAA board members, staff, and friends joined child advocates from around the nation to honor Carol’s success in focusing both public consciousness and public policy efforts on improving the lives of Arizona’s children.
# Publications Available from Children's Action Alliance

- **KIDS COUNT Data Book 1999** - comparison of 50 states on indicators of child well-being
- **Children Without Health Insurance: Listening to Arizona’s Parents** - findings from focus groups and recommendations to simplify the AHCCCS enrollment process for eligible children
- **One in Three: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Hispanic Families in Arizona** - data analysis describing the condition of low-income Hispanic families and action steps to improve their quality of life
- **When Teens Have Sex: Issues and Trends** - analysis and comparison of 50 states on trends in the teen birth rate and teenage sexual behavior
- **State of Arizona’s Children 1997** - report profiling trends in risks for Arizona’s children ($10 charge)
- **Children are Listening: Conversations for their Future** - proceedings of 1997 forums on abused, neglected and abandoned 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)
- **Welfare Reform Watch** - summary of state spending trends for welfare, job training, emergency services, and child care assistance

To order a publication, please call us at (602) 266-0707 or visit www.azchildren.org.

## Board of Directors

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<td>Nadine Mathis Bash, President</td>
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<td>The Honorable Dan Schweiker</td>
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<td>The Honorable Peggy Bilsten</td>
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## Executive Director

**Carol Kamin, Ph.D.**

## Honorary Board

- Eddie Basha
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- Kipp Charlton, M.D.
- Rick DeGraw
- Mark DeMichele
- Win Holden
- Eldon Kramer
- The Honorable John Foreman
- Mary Rimsza, M.D.
- Chip Weil

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- Brad Broker
- Paula Carvalho
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- Rhian Evans
- Jennie Garcia
- Elizabeth Hudgins
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- Dana Wolfe Naimark
- Beth Rosenberg
- Jeff Schrade
- Diane Scott
- Peggy Stenammer
- Darrell Wright

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**Children’s Action Alliance 1999 Gala**

**Through the Eyes of A Child**

The Scottsdale Princess Resort is the place to be on Saturday, September 25, 1999 for CAA’s first annual gala, *Through the Eyes of A Child*. The evening will be a celebration of Arizona’s children including a silent auction of children’s art, dinner, dancing to the C.C. Jones Orchestra and the presentation of the 1999 Horace Steele Child Advocacy Award to the Honorable Grant Woods. Tickets are $200 each or $2,500 for a corporate table. All proceeds will support the work of CAA. For information and tickets, contact Rhian Evans at (602)-266-0707 or revans@azchildren.org.