Over the past year, a remarkable number of Arizona leaders have added their voices to the thousands of Arizonans calling for more state support for prevention efforts. From a wide range of perspectives and experience, these leaders from business, faith communities, government, and law enforcement agree that we are all better off if we can help struggling families become stronger before their children get sick, drop out of school, or get into trouble. And they agree that more state funding is needed for prevention.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**

In June, police chiefs, county prosecutors, and county sheriffs from around the state held a press conference calling for increased public funding for parenting coaches, quality child care, and after-school programs. As part of a national initiative called Fight Crime, Invest in Kids, these Arizona crime fighters explained what their experience has taught them. Maricopa County Attorney Rick Romley said, "Until we start supporting the front-end investments in programs for kids, our fight against crime will always be too little, too late, for too many victims."

**PHOENIX VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE**

In October, the Phoenix Violence Prevention Initiative (PVPI) launched the implementation of 13 strategies to prevent violence. This public/private partnership brought together leaders from the business community, law enforcement, city and county government, the court system, and academia, along with hundreds of citizen volunteers. After a year of research and dialogue, PVPI concluded that the key to preventing violence is to start when children are born. Successfully tearing down gangs, drugs, and crime requires building up support for parents, quality child care, health care coverage, and opportunities for youth.

**ARIZONA TOWN HALL**

Later that same month, hundreds of Arizona citizens from faith communities and education, from government and social work, from large corporations and small businesses spent three days at the Grand Canyon exploring the question Who's Responsible for Arizona's Children? This Arizona Town Hall concluded that "...the needs of children cannot wait. Greater funding and resources must be our first priorities."

The Town Hall recommended that support for families should be available before children start school – even before they are born. The Town Hall also recommended full funding for the Healthy Families, Health Start, and Family Literacy Success by Six programs.

**SMART BEGINNINGS**

A new partnership between Children's Action Alliance and Southwest Human Development, with support from St. Luke's Charitable Health Trust, is working to translate this community consensus into concrete action steps for the long term. Co-chaired by former Attorney General Grant Woods and former Superintendent of Public Instruction, Carolyn Warner, this Smart Beginnings project is working to give Arizona's young children the strongest foundation possible. (See bottom article on page 4.)

**LEADERSHIP FROM THE TOP**

Governor Hull is providing her leadership to this growing chorus as well. After leading the victorious fight for KidsCare health insurance last legislative session, she campaigned with a focus on children and funding for prevention. She has named children's health care and the Health Start and Healthy Families prevention programs as priorities for increased funding from state tax dollars or the tobacco settlement dollars Arizona is slated to receive.

As more and more Arizonans join in speaking up and speaking out, our chorus gets stronger. It's up to us to make our voices loud enough that we can't be ignored and to make our message clear enough that real action can be achieved.
The election is over. The rhetoric has died down and the promises to improve the well-being of Arizona’s children are floating beneath the beautiful Arizona sky. Moving these promises down to earth is the challenge.

While candidates often talk about the importance of children’s progress, Arizona’s children today are losing ground. Despite the combination of a strong economy and some of the largest tax cuts in the nation, hundreds of thousands of Arizona’s children are being left behind. Our children deserve more than talk; they deserve action.

As we write in the newsletter’s cover article, there is a growing chorus of voices all across Arizona. These voices include the 200 participants in the recent Arizona Town Hall on children’s education and community leaders, and the thousands of citizens across our state who have all come to realize that greater public and private investment in families and children will pay off in future returns.

The challenge we continue to face is translating what most Arizonans say they want for all of our children, and what research now tells us children need, into good public and private investment that results in healthy and achieving children.

**CAA Needs You**

Children’s Action Alliance relies on the financial support of people like you to change the lives of children who face overwhelming odds.

**CAA Celebrates**

CAA Board member Steve Roman welcomes Phoenix Mayor Skip Hicks to a CAA holiday party.

Elected officials and other friends enjoyed CAA’s first-ever holiday parties this year. Steve and Terry Roman hosted festivities at their home in Phoenix, December 10th, with delicious treats donated by Eddie and Nadine Basha. Southern Arizonans enjoyed an celebration of their own on December 15th. Steve and Nancy Lynn and Patricia Montiel Overall invited friends of CAA to enjoy the hospitality of David Bartlett and Janice Wredean at their home in Tucson.

Steve Roman is Senior Vice President and Public Affairs Manager for Bank One Arizona. Responsible for media relations, community affairs and legislative affairs, Steve is the spokesman for Bank One’s western region which includes Arizona, Colorado and Utah. Steve brings his expansive knowledge of public and legislative affairs to the work of Children’s Action Alliance.

Steve has an impressive record of public and community involvement. He serves on the Commerce and Economic Development Commission, which distributes state funds for economic development projects. Steve is past president of both the KAET Channel 8 Advisory Board and the Desert Botanical Garden. Steve was an active leader in promoting passage of the Growing Smarter initiative this past November and the creation of the Martin Luther King Civil Rights Day holiday in 1997.

A board member since 1997, Steve contributes his talents to CAA in many ways. He serves on both the investment committee and the executive committee of the board. He also chairs the Arizona Network for Community Responsibility, a partnership of community agencies and advocates working to promote effective and accountable policies to strengthen families.

Steve is a native of Memphis, Tennessee and graduated from the University of Kentucky. He and his wife Terry have two children and live in Phoenix.

Carolyn Warner is the President of Corporate Education Consulting, Inc. (CECI), a national-scale firm which provides consulting, seminar, and lecture services focusing on education, communication and public affairs. Carolyn served in Arizona’s highest elected office for education, State Superintendent for Public Instruction, for 12 years. She was also the Democratic candidate for Governor in 1986.

Carolyn brings her political ability and her deep understanding of childhood development and education to Children’s Action Alliance. She co-chairs the Smart Beginnings steering committee where she will help focus attention on families with the youngest children to keep tomorrow’s teenagers from getting into trouble.

Carolyn is an eloquent speaker and writer. She has written several books, including *The Last Word: A Treasury of Women’s Quotes*, published in 1992 and *From the Schoolhouse to the Senate House: Best Techniques for Connecting Home, School, and Community*, published in 1997. She is actively involved in education issues, serving as national treasurer of Jobs for America’s Graduates and as a Congressional appointee to the National Skill Standards Board. Her experience and passion for excellence in education are a valuable addition to the CAA board.

**CAA Extends a Warm Welcome**

CAA extends a warm welcome to our new staff members:

- **Brad Brooker** began his work at CAA part-time in late January, assisting with development. He joined our staff full-time in August as a Program Associate after receiving his bachelor’s degree in nonprofit agency administration from Arizona State University. Brad is excelling his organizational and fundraising skills as he combines work on health policy issues and CAA fund development.

- **Jennie Garcia** also joined CAA full-time in January as a Program Associate. She recently graduated from law school at Arizona State University and became a member of the bar in October. Jennie is working on early childhood issues. Her analytic and writing talents are important ingredients for CAA’s new Smart Beginnings project.

**Thank You**

Children’s Action Alliance would like to thank our new and continuing volunteers for contributing to CAA’s success. Over the past five months, volunteers have been very active with tasks ranging from setup at the 1998 Gubernatorial Forum for Arizona’s Children, to selling Kid Pins at AIA’s Fine Foods. Thank you all!

We are continuing to recruit volunteers for a wide variety of tasks. To find out more about the CAA volunteer program call Jeff Schade at (602) 266-0707 or visit the volunteer page at www.childrens.org featuring a volunteer calendar and an online volunteer registration form.
Arizona kicks off this new year with an exciting new opportunity to close the gap in children's health care coverage. Children's Action Alliance just received notification of a $1 million three-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to increase the number of qualified children enrolled in health insurance programs such as KidsCare and AHCCCS. With this grant, CAA will build on our health policy work – Healthy Children Arizona – fueled by St. Luke's Charitable Health Trust and St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center. CAA will lead a statewide coalition to outreach to eligible children, to help simplify the enrollment process, and to better coordinate the many pieces of the health care system puzzle.

The grant supports three local hands-on partnerships to increase enrollment. The Phoenix Day Child and Family Learning Center, located in South Phoenix, will link children attending child care centers with community services and health care coverage. In Tucson, the El Rio Community Health Center and the Tucson Community Food Bank will help their uninsured clients enroll in health insurance. And the Yuma County Department of Public Health in the city of

Arizona focuses on smart beginnings.

1. Teach parents about how young children learn and grow and about how and when to find help.
2. Expand and link the public and private support resources for families with the youngest children.
3. Give families options for infant and toddler child care that is affordable and excellent.

KidsCare, Arizona's health care coverage program for uninsured children in working families, is alive and well. More than 4,300 children were enrolled during the last few weeks of the program, which began insuring children on November 1, 1998. And thousands more are in the application process. Children insured through KidsCare will receive comprehensive health insurance, including dental care and behavioral health services.

Information about KidsCare is available by calling 1-877-764-KIDS (toll free). Enrolling in KidsCare (and the AHCCCS health insurance program) is easy. The short application can be completed at home. Parents can get help with the application on the toll-free hotline. And more schools and community organizations around the state are being trained every day to help with KidsCare enrollment so that parents can turn to people in their neighborhoods who know and trust.

Nearly one out of four children applying for KidsCare so far, has turned out to be eligible for the existing AHCCCS/Medicaid coverage program – evidence that many working families don't know that help is available.

New scientific research has proven that the first three years of life dramatically shape human brain development and permanently establish a person's capacity to learn, to cope, and to control emotion. Yet, children remain virtually invisible to the community until they are under five.

At the same time, there are many potential points of contact and many places parents can turn for help. But when the help happens only by chance and usually after families have serious problems, children's Action Alliance (CAA) and Southwest Human Development (SWHD) are proud to announce the birth of a new project called KidsCare Beginnings. Financial support from St. Luke's Charitable Health Trust through the Charles A. Barrow endowment will nurture the project over the next year to accomplish three goals:
According to the U.S. Census, nearly one out of three Arizonans will be Hispanic by the year 2025. Arizona already has the fourth highest percentage of Hispanics in the country and the sixth highest number of Hispanic children. To a large extent, the health of Hispanic families determines Arizona’s future.

Last May, CAA brought together Hispanic leaders from business, education, government, and social services to examine the economic and social issues facing low-income Hispanic families and to identify action steps to strengthen their chances for success. This Project Family Steering Committee guided the research for a report called One in Three: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities Facing Hispanic Families in Arizona. The report presents some striking comparisons between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites in Arizona:

- In 1990, Hispanic children were three times more likely to be poor; In 1993/94, Hispanic youth were almost twice as likely to drop out of school; In 1995, Hispanics were more than twice as likely to lack health insurance.

But the data in the report also contradict commonly held beliefs about the causes of higher risk factors for Hispanic families. Working, not welfare, is a way for life for most low-income Hispanic families. Fewer than 4% of Hispanics in Arizona receive welfare benefits and the employment rate for Hispanics is higher than the employment rate for white non-Hispanics. Concentrated employment in low-paying jobs leads to poverty and related problems for thousands of working Hispanics.

The problems of runaway and homeless youth have not evaporated since the CAA-supported legislation failed to pass in 1992. The proposed legislation, sponsored by Senator Russel Solomon of Tucson, would have expanded community services to strengthen and reunite families and to help runaway and homeless youth.

Arizona’s more than 5,000 homeless youth continue to be a diverse group facing many problems. They may have run away from home after suffering abuse, or been locked out of their homes or abandoned by their parents. There are very few emergency shelters to house and help homeless youth. Other community programs are scattered without sufficient funds. The gaps remain with no services at all, especially in rural areas.

With many homeless adolescents suffering from severe anxiety, depression, poor health and nutrition, and low self-esteem, they confront severe challenges in obtaining an education and becoming self-sufficient—both emotionally and financially. Recent news articles have highlighted the plight of these youth on the street. Senator Russel Solomon and the Governor’s Office have expressed interest in trying to develop creative solutions to address this problem. Children’s Action Alliance convened a workshop last fall to examine the issues. As a result, legislation will be introduced to expand community-based services for homeless youth. The Arizona Homeless Coordinating Office within the Department of Economic Security would be mandated to report annually on the number of homeless youth, the services available and the services missing.

For more information about this issue, contact Ruth Rozenberg at (602) 266-0707 or rrrozenberg@caakidschild.org.

The corporate philanthropic priorities for Bank of America include culture and arts, economic development, environment, and community development. Howell notes that while most children have parents and families to stand up for them individually, the Bank contributes to CAA because “Children’s Action Alliance is the one voice in Arizona that represents kids collectively, particularly those who are disenfranchised. CAA advocates for the whole community of children.”
When Teens Have Sex: Issues and Trends 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 the statewide 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 overview of Arizona's welfare reform policies
KIDS COUNT Data Book 1998 comparison of 50 states on indicators of child well-being

To order a publication, please call us at (602) 266-0707.

Joining our fax or email alert network, which will keep you abreast of the latest issues affecting children in our state with regular updates over email or fax
Volunteering for CAA by completing our on-line volunteer information form or visiting our on-line volunteer center
Fledging a donation on-line to support the work of CAA
Writing to your legislator or the editor of your local newspaper about children's issues

www.azchildren.org is updated regularly, so visit often.

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