



A N N U A L R E P O R T • 2 0 0 8

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families saw a year of growth in 2008 as we launched two milestone projects. First was the formation of the Arkansas Finish Line Coalition, an initiative to get health insurance for every Arkansas child. We also opened our first office outside of Little Rock in Northwest Arkansas, where we're building new advocacy partnerships in the influential and growing region.



Huddleston



Williams

In conjunction with our partners, AACF also embarked on several other new projects in 2008, including promoting greater access to substance abuse treatment for women and children and building support in the faith community for tax fairness and economic justice.

We continued work on several of our long-term efforts. We staffed the work of the Governor's Taskforce on Afterschool and Summer Programs and the Arkansas Out-of-School Network, helped increase public awareness of the child welfare crisis, worked to make the state and federal tax and budget systems fair for all families, and continued efforts to reform the juvenile justice system.

2008 was also a year of tremendous changes at AACF. As a result of new projects and the opening of the satellite office, we ended the year with 12 full-time staff members—half hired in 2008. In November, we also learned that our workflow will greatly change in coming years after voters approved annual sessions of the Arkansas General Assembly.

We owe many thanks to Brad Williams, our 2008 Board President. Brad provided strategic advice during this year of change. Brad's commitment and insight were invaluable as we launched new initiatives. In the months ahead, we have much more to do, especially as the economy worsens and Arkansas families lose homes and jobs. Working together with our partners and policymakers, we'll be working harder than ever to improve public policy and make a difference in the lives of today's children and future generations.

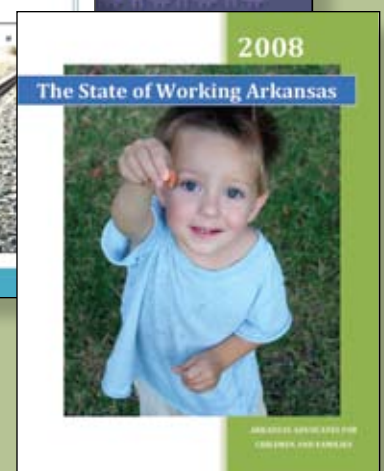
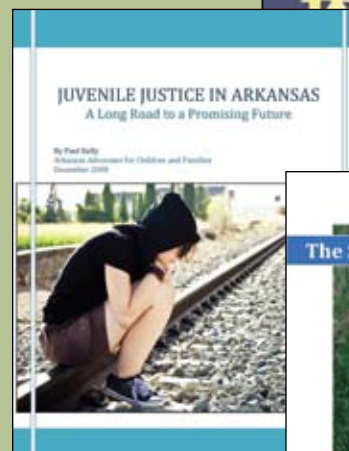
Rich Huddleston

Rich Huddleston, Executive Director



2008 AACF PUBLICATIONS

- Gambling on Our Future: Why a State-Sponsored Lottery is Still a Bad Bet for Education & Families in Arkansas
- Demand for After-School Programs in Arkansas
- Fit Not Fat: Helping Arkansas Children Eat Healthy and Move More
- Enriching Arkansas Children's Lives Through High-Quality Out-Of-School Activities
- Rebuilding Our Fiscal Foundation: Seven steps to Overcoming Arkansas's long-term structural budget deficit
- The State of Working Arkansas: 2008
- Juvenile Justice in Arkansas: A Long Road to a Promising Future
- Waiting for Helping Hands: An Analysis of the Arkansas Child Welfare Crisis
- Paychecks and Politics: A State EITC for Arkansas's Working Families
- What is Arkansas Doing to Close the Achievement Gap?
- Finding a Family for a Lifetime: Aging Out of the Foster Care System



Thirty years of advocacy

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families celebrated its 30th anniversary with 300 supporters at a dinner at The Peabody Hotel in Little Rock on Oct. 7. Highlights of the event included a silent auction of “political experiences,” a historical presentation of AACF’s work narrated by AACF Board President Brad Williams and a keynote speech by State Sen. Jim Argue. The anniversary celebration was guided by a committee of past presidents chaired by 2006 Board President Sandra Brown.

Expanding to Northwest Arkansas

In September, AACF opened its first satellite office outside Little Rock to serve Northwest Arkansas. The new office in Springdale had long been a goal of AACF supporters in the region to advocate for the large and growing number of children and families living in poverty in the area. Laura Kellams of Fayetteville became AACF’s first Northwest Arkansas director. A former newspaper reporter who covered the Legislature for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Laura is putting her policy and communications experience to work in raising the profile of AACF in Northwest Arkansas. She wears many hats, representing AACF on the full spectrum of advocacy areas from health to tax and federal policy to child welfare and education. She continues to reach out to existing AACF allies and new contacts as part of a “listening tour” of the needs of children in the state’s growing northwest corner.

Children’s Health: Crossing the Finish Line to Covering All Kids

AACF launched the Finish Line project in early 2008 with the goal of getting health insurance for every Arkansas child. Since then, about 8,000 children have been enrolled in ARKids First, the state children’s health insurance program. This is following several years of stagnant or even falling enrollment in the program due to staffing limitations at the Arkansas Department of Human Services and decreased emphasis on outreach of ARKids First enrollment and renewals. With assistance of five local partners around the state, AACF led a statewide push for increasing enrollment by publicizing the program and coordinating a grassroots push to get clear and concise information on the need to enroll eligible children to more health and education providers. This year we also began to lay the groundwork for extending ARKids First to more uninsured children by raising income eligibility.



Attending the opening of the Northwest Arkansas office (from left): Rep. Mary Lou Slinkard of Gravette, Washington County Judge Marilyn Edwards, Sen. Sue Madison, AACF Northwest Arkansas Director Laura Kellams and AACF board member Lynn Carver.

Advocating for Fair Tax and Budget Systems in Arkansas

Arkansas achieved an historic agreement in 2008 to modernize and increase its severance tax on natural gas producers—for decades one of the lowest in the nation. The new law passed by the state legislature brings our severance tax more in line with the national average and relieves pressure on the budget for other low-income initiatives. Over the previous five years, AACF had released several analyses on this issue as part of our work for the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative (SFAI).

AACF's research on the potential negative impacts of a state-run lottery on low-income families was widely cited in the media in 2008. Although the ballot measure passed, we hope that our work will guide the General Assembly as it drafts laws to govern the distribution of scholarship money and monitors the lottery's implementation. AACF also released several other tax and budget publications and outreach materials last year, from a policy brief outlining how Arkansas can overcome its structural budget deficit, to our 2008 report, *The State of Working Arkansas*.

AACF focused its outreach efforts on recruiting members of the faith community to sign a "Call to Fairness," an interfaith pledge to work for greater tax and budget fairness in Arkansas. AACF also hosted several events on the role of the faith community in child advocacy, ranging from brunches and panel discussions to a children's service at a Little Rock church.

Fairness and Balance at the Federal Level

AACF continued to advocate at the federal level for adequate funding for critical programs that support low-income families and ensure a fair federal tax structure. AACF created a state-wide tax and budget network to support legislation such as lowering the earnings threshold for the refundable Child Tax Credit and the reauthorization of the food stamps and State Child Health Insurance programs. We launched the "Moving Families Forward" information campaign with e-newsletters that include alerts and the latest information. AACF and several of our partners also met with Sen. Mark Pryor during the summer Congressional recess to stress the importance of funding for critical programs.



AACF Executive Director Rich Huddleston with former AACF executive directors Jo Luck (left) and Amy Rossi at AACF's 30th Anniversary Dinner.

Working to Close the Achievement Gap

In a partnership with Hendrix College, Arkansas Public Policy Panel and the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, AACF released a widely cited report on the academic achievement gap following the post-Lake View education system reforms.

"What is Arkansas Doing to Close the Achievement Gap?" was co-authored by Clinton School professor of education policy Dr. Keith Nitta and Hendrix College professor of politics Dr. Jay Barth. The report assesses whether reforms Arkansas has adopted are likely to close the achievement gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students and between white and minority children in the state. The study also identifies additional promising steps to close the achievement gap in future years.

AACF staff also worked in the fall and winter with the Arkansas Public Policy Panel to develop and build support for several pieces of legislation to be introduced in the 2009 session of the Arkansas General Assembly.

Keeping Child Welfare Out Front

Each year more than 200 Arkansas youth turn 18 and leave the foster care system without finding a family. AACF highlighted this information, along with the steps our state should take to help these youth transition to adulthood, in the release of: "Finding a Family for a Lifetime: Aging Out of the Foster Care System." AACF also released its annual child welfare system report, "Waiting for Helping Hands: An Analysis of the Arkansas Child Welfare System," on the poor performance of the Arkansas child welfare system. The report raised concerns about the safety of children in the child welfare system because of several deaths due to abuse and neglect while the children were in state custody.

As part of the Arkansas Families First Coalition, AACF helped fight a ballot initiative that banned unmarried couples from being foster and adoptive families. The proposal was approved by voters despite our efforts to provide information on the shortage of foster care and adoptive homes in the state. We also stressed the importance of placements being made on an individual, case-by-case basis by trained caseworkers and juvenile judges.

Finding Solutions for Substance Abuse Treatment

Substance abuse is a major reason why children and parents enter the child welfare, juvenile justice, prison and mental health systems in Arkansas. AACF is now part of a statewide effort to raise public awareness, increase state funding and improve the quality of substance abuse treatment across the state. Arkansas has not increased funding for substance abuse treatment in more than 13 years, and only 5 percent of Arkansans needing treatment can access these services.

Building a Foundation for Out-of-School Programs

Three AACF board members and one staff member served on the Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for After School and Summer Programs. The recommendations of the task force outlined a clear and convincing set of recommendations for how Arkansas can proceed to make high-quality afterschool and summer programs available across the state in the years ahead. The realization of how such programs keep children safe, support working families, and inspire children to learn has reached a new level in Arkansas. Through the work of the task force and the Arkansas Out-of-School Network, the ground work was laid so that AACF could continue to advocate for a major expansion.

Moving Juvenile Justice Away from Institutions

Efforts to reduce the state's over-reliance on large institutional settings to serve the state's juvenile offenders continued this year. AACF remains an active member of the Task Force on Juvenile Justice Reform. We published a report: "Juvenile Justice in Arkansas: A Long Road To a Promising Future" to highlight new data and make specific recommendations for moving juvenile offenders toward a more promising future of treatment closer to home and away from institutional settings.



Founding AACF board members (from left) Dr. Betty Lowe, Betty Bumpers, Pat Lile and Jim Miles at AACF's 30th Anniversary Dinner.

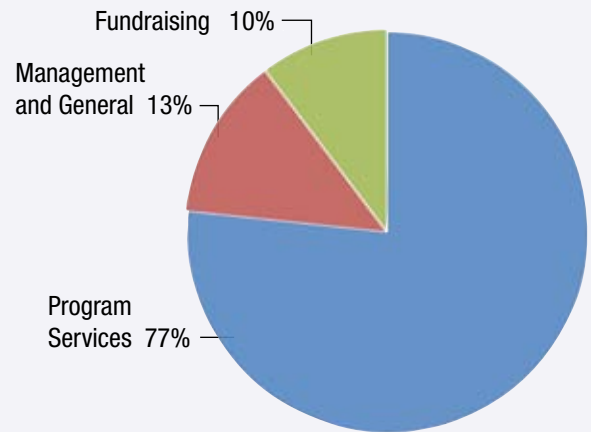
2008 AACF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total Revenue & Support.....	1,294,940
Total Expenses.....	1,374,549
Decrease in Unrestricted Net Assets	(79,609)
Increase in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	338,742
Change in Net Assets	259,133
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	608,781
Net Assets, End of Year	867,914

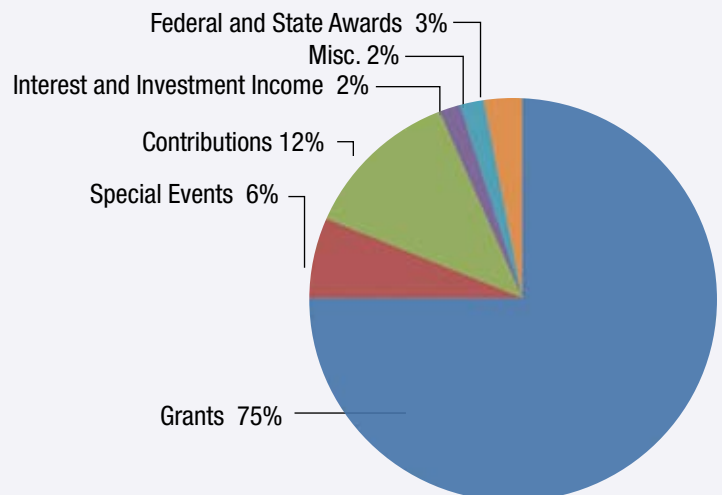
For the Year Ended December 31, 2008

From audited financials prepared by Thomas and Thomas LLP

EXPENSES



TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT



Kids Count Coalition

After more than ten years in operation, the Arkansas Kids Count Coalition continues to fulfill its mission to be “the collective force shaping public policy in Arkansas.” This year it embarked on a statewide summer tour to visit all corners of the state to make policy presentations and hear from Arkansans. AACF staff and Kids Count Coalition partners presented a variety of research and information on children’s issues in Helena-West Helena, Texarkana, Springdale, Jonesboro and Harrison. In preparation for the upcoming legislative session, the coalition held its fall Pre-Legislative Conference to hear from key decision makers and experts on legislative proposals and prospects for children during the 2009 legislative session.



AACF board members Greg Joslin and Khayyam Eddings volunteer at the 27th Annual Soup Sunday fundraiser.

Eliminating Predatory Payday Lending

Predatory payday lenders were dealt blow after blow in 2008. First, Attorney General Dustin McDaniel sent letters to payday lenders demanding they stop issuing loans that violated a state constitutional limit of 17 percent interest. More than 150 complied and closed. In November, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that the Arkansas Check-Cashers Act of 1999 violated the state’s constitution. The ruling forced even more lenders out of business. AACF will continue to work with Arkansans Against Abusive Payday Lending to monitor the industry as it looks for new ways to take advantage of low-income Arkansans.

Saying Goodbye

AACF lost a long time member of our family, board member Gil Buchanan, in December of 2008. Dr. Buchanan was a pediatrician who spent his career advocating on behalf of Arkansas’ children. He served on AACF’s Board from 1990 to 1996 and 2002 to 2008, and was Board President in 1993 and 2005.



Buchanan

2008 PARTNERS *

- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Arkansas Children’s Hospital
- Arkansas Department of Human Services
- Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Fred Darragh Foundation
- Harvey and Bernice Jones Charitable Trust
- Nathan Dalton Whetstone Endowment/ARCF
- Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
- MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
- Munro Foundation
- Riggs Trust
- Stoneman Family Foundation
- Voices for America’s Children
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Walton Family Foundation
- Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

*Provided \$5,000 or more to support the work of AACF.

2008 Board of Directors

Terri Beiner

Professor, UALR Law School
Little Rock

Gil Buchanan

Retired Pediatrician
Little Rock

Lynn Donald Carver

Family Support Services
Springdale

Angela Duran

President, Southern Good Faith Fund
Pine Bluff

Khayyam Eddings

Attorney
Friday, Eldredge & Clark, LLP
Little Rock

Marq Golden

Youth Services Coordinator,
City of Little Rock
Little Rock

Lowell Grisham

Rector, St. Paul Episcopal Church
Fayetteville

Ray Hanley

Vice President, EDS
Little Rock

Melissa Henshaw, Treasurer

Senior Vice President,
Metropolitan National Bank
Little Rock

Alice Hines

Professor, Hendrix College
Conway

Greg Joslin

Broker, Irwin Partners
Little Rock

Freeman McKindra, President-Elect

Community Liaison,
School of Public Health
Little Rock

Jim Miles

President,
Covenant Medical Benefits, Inc
Jonesboro

Chiquita Munir

National Diversity Sales Manager,
The Peabody Little Rock
Little Rock

Toyce Newton

Executive Director,
Phoenix Youth & Family Services Inc.
Crossett

Eduardo R. Ochoa, Jr.

Assistant Professor/Pediatrician,
UAMS
Little Rock

Darren Peters

Director, Federal Policy Initiatives,
Entergy
Little Rock

John Riggs IV, Past Board President

Owner, J.A. Riggs Tractor Company
Little Rock

Chad Rodgers

Pediatrician,
Little Rock Pediatric Clinic
Little Rock

Willa Black Sanders

Assistant Dean,
School of Public Health
Little Rock

E'van Steele, Secretary

Vice President,
Advantage Communications
Little Rock

Brad Williams, President

Executive Director, Argenta CDC
Little Rock

Beth Wilson

Professor, Harding University
Searcy

Diana Gonzales Worthen

Educator, University of Arkansas
Springdale

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families 2008 Staff

Rich Huddleston, Executive Director

Jennifer Ferguson, Deputy Director

Ginny Blankenship, Research
and Fiscal Policy Director

Pat Bodenhamer, State Tax
and Budget Outreach Director

Elisabeth Wright Burak,
Health Policy Director

Laura Kellams,
Northwest Arkansas Director

Paul Kelly, Senior Policy Analyst

Nancy Leonhardt, Development Director

Tara Manthey, Communications Director

Malisa Morris, Administrative Assistant

Candice Smith, Federal Budget
and Tax Policy Director

Kara Wilkins,
Health Outreach Coordinator





The mission of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families is to ensure that all children and their families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives and to realize their full potential.



Little Rock:

Union Station, Suite 306 • 1400 West Markham
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: 501.371.9678 • Fax: 501.371.9681

Northwest Arkansas:

614 East Emma, Suite 127 • Springdale, AR 72764
Phone: 479.927.9800 • Fax 479.751.1110

