



ANNUAL REPORT



2015

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What a year it's been! It was a milestone year of political change in Arkansas. Because of term limits and the changing political landscape at the state capitol, we lost many of our long-time champions of children's issues on both sides of the political aisle. At the same time, tax cuts that leave out the poor and reducing government spending have both become high priorities at the state capitol, which does not bode well for support of public services impacting the well-being of our most vulnerable children and families. Our work during the 2015 legislative session was the most challenging in the 20-plus years I have been at AACF.

Because of these changes, we have spent a great deal of time thinking about how to elevate children's issues to the top of the policy agenda in Arkansas. We've worked with the governor's office and legislators to build public will and support for the investments we know our children need. We made a real effort to reach out to our allies, cultivate new ones, and educate those still on the fence.

We know what our children need to be successful later in life — a healthy start, a good education no matter their zip code, and opportunities to thrive in and out of school. And it doesn't matter to us whether the state is considered red, blue, or somewhere in between, we'll work tirelessly to make sure our kids have those things.

Sincerely,

Rich Huddleston



Executive Director
Rich Huddleston

2015 AACF PUBLICATIONS

Arkansas's Private Option Works for Families and Our Economy

Child Poverty in Northwest Arkansas

Education in the Post-Lake View Era

Kids at the Capitol 2015

Increasing Placement Stability in Foster Care

Summary of Arkansas's Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Mental Health

Racing Toward the Finish Line: Kids' Health Coverage in 2015

Missing the Mark: Race Equity and Missed Opportunities in the 2015 Session

Top Ten Principles for Health Reform in Arkansas

What Would it Take to be Number One in 2015

The State of Working Arkansas

The AACF Guide to School Funding

The Credit They Deserve: Federal EITC Participation in Arkansas

The Business Case for Pre-K

What Schools Need to Succeed: A Look at Three Schools

Street Smarts: The Right Way to Fund Arkansas Highways

What do #ARKidsNeed from Birth to Age Eight

Parents' Guide to Pre-K Advocacy

Wealth, Education, and the Opportunity Gap

The State of Early Childhood Education





ARKANSAS ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2015 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



(above, from left) AACF participated in the first Arkansas Gives Day, a statewide online giving campaign, and raised approximately \$56,000; AACF Board President Jim Argue with his daughter, Sarah Argue; Jennifer Ferguson with her children Mark and Helen enjoying the Soup Sunday festivities; In the spring, AACF dedicated its new conference room in memory of long-time board member and child advocate Dr. Gil Buchanan. The conference room was funded by the Riggs Benevolent Fund.

CHILD HEALTH

Health care was a big focus during the 2015 legislative session. The Health Reform Act of 2015 was passed, which halted additional costs for Private Option enrollees and changes to the ARKids B program. The Act also created the Health Care Reform Task Force to make recommendations about the future of the Private Option and the entire Medicaid program. The Medicaid appropriation bill also passed without opposition, which allows the Private Option to continue to be funded. After the session, AACF brought together a bipartisan group of lawmakers and health leaders in the state for a fall health care forum. We have attended every meeting of the Task Force and will continue to give a voice to Arkansans who need affordable coverage.

While the debate continues on the future of the health care system, we've continued to celebrate coverage gains for children and families. Arkansas remains a national leader in dropping the number of uninsured adults and less than 5 percent of children are now uninsured in the state. Our outreach and enrollment work has also helped to get families enrolled in coverage. Through the Arkansans for Coverage (AFC) campaign we reached over 175,000 households through a mail campaign. We reached thousands more through the successful launch of the AFC website, radio ads, and social media.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

AACF was instrumental in drafting and enacting a bill that established the Youth Justice Reform Board. This governor-appointed board will make recommendations for crucial juvenile justice reform during the 2017 legislative session. AACF staff serves on this board and is working to ensure recommendations will significantly reduce inappropriate incarceration and expand effective community alternatives. AACF staff has testified before the Legislative Criminal Justice Task Force, published a guest editorial in the statewide newspaper, and participated in community forums across Arkansas to advance these important reforms.

AFTER-SCHOOL

Prior to and during the 2015 legislative session, AACF met with several lawmakers to push for a dedicated revenue source that would fund the Positive Youth Development (PYD) Act, a grant program to expand high-quality after-school opportunities statewide. From those meetings, two bills emerged, HB1958 and HB1570. While neither of those bills was successful, it enabled advocates to go on record before a legislative body highlighting the need for more investments in our children. Although our work did not result in funding, this year's efforts showed promise. More policymakers recognize the need for high-quality after-school and summer programs. AACF will continue to work closely with allies such as the Arkansas Out of School Network to broaden support and secure funding for after-school and summer programs.



Guests of all ages enjoyed dozens of soups, breads and desserts at both Soup Sunday events, which collectively raised \$170,000.

CHILD WELFARE

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson commissioned a review of the Arkansas Child Welfare System during the legislative session after it came to light that a legislator had “rehomed” the children he had adopted from the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The media attention brought out other adoptive parents who raised other issues with DCFS. Meanwhile, caseloads of DCFS caseworkers were nearly double (29 cases) the recommended national average (15 cases). AACF was interviewed as part of that review process, and the report from the review contained 10 recommendations on improving the child welfare system. AACF was appointed to the Child Welfare Oversight Panel to assist in implementing those recommendations.

PROGRESS IN NWA

While our work in Northwest Arkansas covers a wide range of AACF's issues, the Springdale-based office includes a special emphasis on improving the public's understanding of the benefits of public investment. With a new governor and many of the state's legislative power brokers calling this region home, AACF's only satellite office continues to strengthen its influence in a region with growing political clout. All of the priorities of AACF – from child welfare and juvenile justice to education and health – are the focus of our Springdale-based office. But in 2015, we worked in particular to raise regional awareness of the need for high-quality pre-K, immigrant children's access to health care, and the growing need for critical support of our state's foster care system.

TAX AND BUDGET WORK + ECONOMIC SECURITY

AACF continues to stand up against unfair tax cuts that benefit the wealthy and loot public programs that everyone counts on like libraries and quality pre-K centers. This year we fought to redirect these unnecessary tax cuts toward programs that help working families stay at work and keep more of what they earn. We put particular focus on programs that would benefit the bottom 20 percent of earners in Arkansas, the only group left out of the income tax cut passed during the 2015 legislative session. Numerous blogs, reports, infographics, and presentations were devoted to broadening support for paid maternity leave, retaining unemployment benefits, increasing protection from wage theft, preventing barriers to public benefits, and implementing a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for working families. Our most significant victory was defeating the Highway Robbery bill (House Bill 1346), which would have taken money from programs like quality pre-K and used it to fund highways. AACF will continue to speak out on behalf of families in Arkansas who struggle with low wages and a tax system that repeatedly gives handouts to the rich instead of working families.

EDUCATION

During the 2015 legislative session, we fought hard to increase the funding for Arkansas's quality pre-K program. Nearly 200 people, including children in two pre-K classes, participated in a Pre-K Day at the Capitol. Legislators read to the children, and teachers and parents visited with policymakers about the importance of early learning. While we did not secure the amount of funding the program so desperately needs, the one-time \$3 million infusion awarded during the legislative session is the first increase the program has seen in many years.

In addition to pre-K, we also advocated for the creation of a legislative task force that would find ways to improve Special Education services in Arkansas schools. The legislation passed and AACF is serving on that task force to provide input and will later release a report on issues in Special Education.

AACF continued our work with the Arkansas Campaign for Grade Level Reading and the Arkansas Department of Education to reduce chronic absence in schools and to implement a program to support early literacy through parent engagement. We also worked with the Good 2 Great initiative to improve access to quality pre-K in Marvell, Elaine, and Prescott. Local community leaders, parents, and educators inform and guide these organizations on how to best help them in improving outcomes for children from birth to age eight. The hope is to provide a model for statewide pre-K policy change through empowered local community efforts.



AACF hosted a series of Post-Legislative Conferences, including one in Rogers. Here, Health Policy Director Marquita Little speaks to the audience about the key issues surrounding health care in Arkansas.

OUTREACH

The Arkansas Kids Count Coalition held a Day at the Capitol during the 2015 legislative session. About 230 advocates from around the state converged to talk to legislators about important issues impacting kids, including pre-K, juvenile justice reform, and access to quality health care. AACF hosted a series of Post-Legislative Conferences in Little Rock, Rogers, and Jonesboro (in partnership with Enroll the Ridge). Nearly 200 participants took part in the conferences, which featured breakout sessions led by AACF staff members and other policy experts, as well as legislative panels and media speakers.

Advocates from around the state had the opportunity to take part in Policy Café events throughout the year. Policy Cafés are participatory mini-conferences featuring small table discussions, each facilitated by a policy expert, about a range of issues that impact the well-being of children and families in Arkansas.



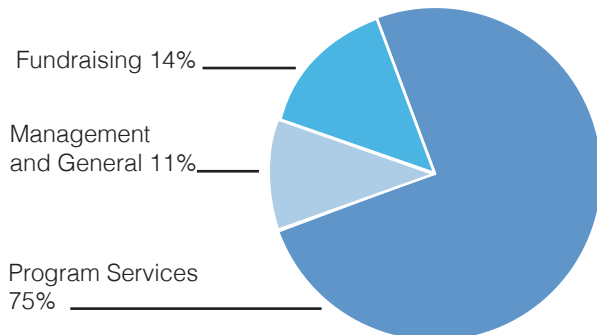
2015 AACF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total Revenue & Support.....	1,943,577
Total Expenses.....	1,889,815
Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets.....	53,762
Decrease in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets.....	-125,775
Change in Net Assets.....	-72,013
Net Assets, Beginning of Year.....	1,185,741
Net Assets, End of Year.....	1,113,728

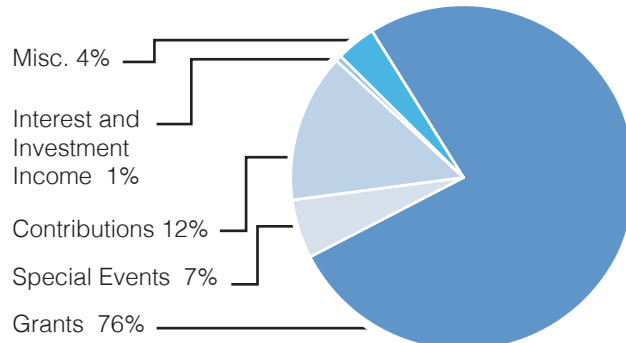
For the Year Ended December 31, 2015

From audited financials prepared by Thomas and Thomas LLP

EXPENSES



TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT



2015 FUNDERS

Grant Funders (\$5,000 and more)

Annie E. Casey Foundation	Nathan Dalton Whetstone Endowment for Arkansas/ACF
Arkansas Public Policy Panel	Public Welfare Foundation
Center on Budget & Policy Priorities	Riggs Benevolent Fund
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Community Catalyst, Inc.	Schott Foundation for Public Education
David and Lucile Packard Foundation	Stoneman Family Foundation
Early Childhood Funders' Collaborative	The New World Foundation
Fred Darragh Foundation	W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation	Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

Organization Donors (\$1,000 and more)

Acxiom	Edward's Food Giant	Mercy Health System NWA
Adventure Subaru	Endeavor Foundation	Methodist Foundation of Arkansas
Arkansas Blue Cross & Blue Shield	Entergy	Mitchell Williams Law Firm
Arkansas Center for Health Improvement	Exodus	Munro Foundation
Arkansas Children's Hospital	Harp's Food Stores, Inc.	Olds Foundation
Arkansas Education Association	James, Carter & Coulter, PLLC	QualChoice
Arkansas Hospital Association	JPMS Cox, PLLC	RH Cuisine, LLC
Arkansas Minority Health Commission	Kutak Rock, LLP	Schmieding Foundation
Bank of the Ozarks	Legacy Termite & Pest Control, Inc.	Second Presbyterian Church
C. Louis and Mary C. Cabe Foundation	Little Rock Children's Clinic	Southeastern Insurance Group
Catlett Law Firm	Little Rock Pediatric Group, P.A.	Subaru of Little Rock
Central Arkansas Library System	McDonald's of Northwest Arkansas	UAMS Department of Pediatrics
Cross, Gunter, Witherspoon & Galchus	McKee Foods Corp. & Affiliates	Walmart Foundation
Delta Dental of Arkansas	McMath Woods, P.A.	William H. Bowen Family Foundation

Individual Donors (\$1,000 and more)

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Janet and Mark Brown	Christine and Pete Hartman	Johnnie and Tommy Roebuck
Dr. Tom Bruce	Sharon Heflin	Amy Rossi and Joe Bryan
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Donna and Lewis Epley	Brenda Mize	Geoffrey Yamauchi
Jennifer and Todd Ferguson	Kelly and Dr. Eddie Ochoa	

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2015 FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AWARD RECIPIENTS
(from left) Bobby Roberts, Tjuana Byrd, Joe Thompson

ARKANSAS ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 2015 STAFF



(standing, from left) Lynne Gemmell; Mallory Van Dover; Rich Huddleston; Eleanor Wheeler; Jennifer Ferguson; Cara Neal; Paul Kelly; Laura Kellams; Tamika Edwards; Gerard Matthews

(seated, from left) Alexis Hampo; Bailey Perkins; Sarah Pearce; Kerri Michael Sernel; Marquita Little

Rich Huddleston

Executive Director

Jennifer Ferguson

Deputy Director

Tamika Edwards

Director of
Governmental Affairs

Lynne Gemmell

Administrative
Assistant

Alexis Hampo

Communications
Intern

Christine Hartman

Northwest Arkansas
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Kathryn Hazelett

Education Policy
Director

Laura Kellams

Northwest Arkansas
Director

Paul Kelly

Senior Policy Analyst

Marquita Little

Health Policy Director

Gerard Matthews

Communications
Director

Cara Neal

Administrative and
Events Director

Sarah Pearce

Health Care Policy
Fellow

Bailey Perkins

Education and Fiscal
Policy Fellow

Kerri Michael

Sernel
Outreach Director

Mallory Van Dover

Development Director

Eleanor Wheeler

Senior Policy Analyst



www.aradvocates.org

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.



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Fax: 479.751.1110



(clockwise from top) 2015 LR Soup Sunday chairperson Molly McGowan and Emily Argue Stotts with her daughter, Charlotte Stotts; Dr. Aaron and Anna Strong, Board Member Dr. Gary Wheeler; Nicole and Darrin Williams; Laura Kellams and Christine Hartman; Rick Fleetwood and Judy Tenenbaum toast to Soup Sunday; Clay Buchanan, Helen Buchanan and Dr. Kate Mitchell at the AACF Conference Room dedication; Dr. Chad Rodgers and Eric McDaniels.