



Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

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# Advocacy Matters



Spring 2026

IN THIS ISSUE:

Soup Sunday Success

Report: Baby Bonds in Arkansas

Staff Spotlight: Hayley Cormican

## SOUPREME Sundays!



For our 45th anniversary Central Arkansas Soup Sunday, we expanded into an incredible venue to accommodate record-breaking ticket sales!

This year's Soup Sundays marked another record-breaking success, with more than 3,200 tickets sold across both the Northwest and Central Arkansas events and raising a combined \$760,000 in support of our mission (a 76% increase in fundraising over last year's phenomenal success).

The 25th annual Northwest Arkansas Soup Sunday was presented by Ingeborg Initiatives, Excellerate Foundation & the Bozie Foundation and held at the Rogers Convention Center. Chairs were Channing Barker, Kayln Chance & Lindsay Rabicoff.



Isabella's won the Foodie's Choice Award with their White Cheddar Dill Soup at Northwest Arkansas Soup Sunday.

The 45th annual Central Arkansas Soup Sunday was presented by Love, Titos and held at the Jack Stephens Center at UA Little Rock. This year's event was chaired by the Steliga Family — Kelly, Matt, Allie and Claire — our first-ever family to lead the charge!

A total of 75 restaurants, caterers, and bakeries contributed soups, breads, and desserts, including gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian options.



Siam Thai Cuisine won the Northwest Arkansas People's Choice Golden Ladle Award with their Khai Soi Soup.

Guests enjoyed music, silent auctions, and

opportunities to connect with the community and our mission to advance equity and opportunity for all Arkansas families.



Afrobites received the Dave Williams Golden Ladle Award at Central Arkansas Soup Sunday.

From generous sponsors and dedicated volunteers to local restaurants and community members, these events reflect what is possible when Arkansans come together with a shared purpose.

Every dollar raised helps advance policies that improve children's health, education, and economic security across the state. The staff at Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families are deeply grateful to everyone who made this year's Soup Sunday events such a success.

For more Arkansas Advocates event photos, visit flickr.com/photos/aacf.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

## Policy 101 Series

The Arkansas Kids Count Coalition is celebrating 30 years of advocacy for our state's children. The Coalition is hosting a monthly webinar series, Policy 101, designed to help advocates, community members, and partners better understand how policy works in Arkansas — and how to engage with it effectively.

Through this series, participants gain practical knowledge on topics like the legislative process, how to communicate with policymakers, and ways to advocate for policies that support children and families. Whether you are new to advocacy or looking to deepen your impact, Policy 101 offers tools to help turn knowledge into action.

People who attend or watch the recording of 10 complete webinars in the series will receive a certificate of completion. Register at [aradvocates.org/events](http://aradvocates.org/events).

## Friends of Children Annual Luncheon

October 7 in Little Rock. Save the date; details soon!



2026  
Policy 101  
Series

## Arkansas Advocates Issue Areas

Arkansas Advocates focuses on key issue areas to help improve child well-being in Arkansas.

- Child welfare
- Economic security
- Early childhood and K-12 education
- Health care
- Hunger
- Immigrant children and families
- Juvenile justice
- Racial equity
- Tax and budget

## AACF REPORT

# Baby Bonds and Arkansas



The median household income in Arkansas is \$60,773. But household wealth is just as important as income. Wealth is a family's economic reserve, providing economic security over a lifetime. As families struggle to pay the bills, they have no extra funds for savings or wealth-building activities, such as post-secondary education, job training, purchasing a home, or starting a business. Baby Bonds are designed to alleviate wealth-building challenges. Learn more about this pro-family, pro-opportunity, pro-growth program and how it could change Arkansas. Find out more at [aradvocates.org/publications](http://aradvocates.org/publications).

## Arkansas Advocates 2026 Board of Directors

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## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

# Hayley Cormican

### Health Policy Associate

This spring, we are proud to spotlight Hayley Cormican and the important work she brings to Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

Hayley plays a key role in advancing policies that support children and families across the state, with a focus on research, advocacy, and community engagement. Her work helps translate complex policy issues into meaningful action, ensuring that decision-makers and communities alike have access to clear, accurate information.

She is especially passionate about creating equitable opportunities for all Arkansans and strengthening systems that support long-term well-being. Whether working behind the scenes on policy analysis or engaging directly with partners and stakeholders, Hayley's contributions continue to make a strong impact.



# SNAP Cost Shifts

Proposed changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding could place new pressure on Arkansas and create challenges for families who rely on food assistance.

These cost shifts would require states to take on a larger share of both administrative costs and, potentially, benefit funding. For Arkansas, this could strain an already tight budget and force difficult decisions about how to maintain the program at its current level.

SNAP plays a critical role in reducing food insecurity across the state. Many working families, children, and older adults depend on it to help cover basic needs. If funding becomes more limited or harder to sustain,

access to benefits could be reduced or more difficult to navigate.

The impact would not stop at individual households. SNAP dollars are typically spent quickly and locally, supporting grocery stores and businesses in communities across Arkansas. Reductions in funding could have ripple effects on local economies, especially in rural areas where resources are already limited.

Without careful planning and policy response, these proposed shifts could increase hunger and widen existing gaps in access to food. Protecting the strength and stability of SNAP will be key to supporting families and maintaining economic resilience across the state.

# Medicaid Storytelling: Personal Stories Matter

Policy can feel distant or technical, but its effects show up in everyday life. Behind every Medicaid policy decision are real people trying to access care, support their families, and stay healthy.

That is where storytelling becomes important. Personal stories help connect policy to lived experience, making it easier to understand what is working and where gaps still exist. They highlight barriers that data alone cannot always capture, like delays in coverage, confusion around eligibility, or challenges finding providers.

We encourage Arkansans to share their Medicaid experiences because those perspectives help shape stronger, more responsive policy. When individuals speak about what they have gone through, they bring attention to issues that might otherwise be overlooked.

These stories also make a difference in how policymakers engage. Hearing directly from constituents adds urgency and clarity in a way statistics alone often cannot. It shifts the conversation from abstract numbers to real-world impact.

Sharing a story is not just about being heard. It is a way to contribute to meaningful change. By lifting up these experiences, we can push for policies that better reflect the needs of Arkansas families.

If you or someone you know has a Medicaid story to share, please contact Hayley Cormican at [hcormican@aradvocates.org](mailto:hcormican@aradvocates.org).

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Although most gifts to Arkansas Advocates come in the form of cash and check, there are other ways to give. You can make a donation of stock or transfer from your IRA with beneficial tax implications. For more information, contact Fran or Esther or your financial advisor.