LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families has always done a good job of changing with the times. As we’ve watched the political climate in Arkansas shift over the past couple of years, we’ve responded with our own changes as well.

Over the past year we’ve created a full-time governmental affairs position in order to devote more resources to educating policymakers. We’ve added a Health Outreach Policy Fellow to make sure Arkansans know about affordable coverage options available to them through the Private Option and Arkansas’s Health Insurance Marketplace. Our education work has expanded and now includes the help of an Education Policy Fellow, a position we’ve created with the help of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, D.C.

On a personal note, this year marked my tenth year as Executive Director. It’s been my pleasure to be a part of this organization and the vital work that it does for the state. Although the political landscape has changed, I feel we’re as well-suited as we’ve ever been to help Arkansas kids. We don’t know exactly what challenges will come with the new year. But rest assured, AACF is at the ready to be a voice for the children of Arkansas.

Richard Huddleston

2014 AACF PUBLICATIONS

- Paying a Living Wage Will Make Arkansas A Better Place to Live and Work
- Income Inequality is Hurting Arkansas
- Why Detention is Not Always the Answer: A closer look at youth lock-up in Arkansas
- Fighting Unemployment Will Boost Arkansas’s Economy
- What You Should Know About Common Core State Standards
- A Parent’s Guide to Arkansas Common Core State Standards
- The Truth About Common Core Testing and Student Privacy
- 2014 Voter’s Guide
- Getting In: Improving consumer-friendly enrollment in Arkansas
- Reducing the Number of Children Who Enter the Foster Care System
- Reducing a Child’s Time in Foster Care
- A Boost for Working Families: How the EITC Helps Arkansans, and Our Economy
- Keeping Arkansans Covered: How Changes to the Private Option Could Impact Families
- Insuring Arkansas’s Children: Next Steps in the ARKids First Program
- Connectors to Coverage
- From Playgrounds to Prisons
- 5 Things You Should Know About Pre-K in Arkansas
- Creating a Prosperous Future: Reducing Poverty in Arkansas
- Budget Surpluses in Arkansas
- Legislative Interim Study on Pre-K in Arkansas
- Infographic Income Inequality Needs a Tune-up
- Infographic Houston, the Poverty Line has a Problem
- Infographic Common Core in Arkansas
A leading voice on health coverage

This was a monumental year in Arkansas as we saw significant improvements in access to affordable health coverage for families. As enrollment increased through the Private Option and Health Insurance Marketplace, Arkansas emerged as a national leader. With over 220,000 people approved for Private Option coverage, we markedly reduced the rate of uninsured adults from 22 percent last year to 12.5 percent halfway through 2014. We also celebrated 32,000 children enrolling in affordable coverage along with their caregivers at our “Superheroes for ARKids First” press conference in the spring.

In 2014, we continued to engage a broad base of partners to protect coverage for children and families through our coalition work. During the 2014 fiscal session, the General Assembly again voted to appropriate funding for the Private Option. Despite some opposition, the legislature obtained the needed 75 percent approval in each house. Although the annual re-appropriation was a major victory, new restrictions on state agencies were adopted preventing use of public funds for health care outreach and enrollment. To help fill the outreach gap, AACF and several partner organizations launched Arkansans for Coverage, a network to support enrollment assisters with technical assistance and outreach resources and materials.

Closing the achievement gap in education

Efforts to secure more funding for the state’s pre-K program in the 2014 fiscal session, while unsuccessful, set the stage for the battle ahead in the 2015 legislative session. AACF wrote and presented an interim study on early childhood education to lawmakers. Our work with the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading culminated in the release of five pre-K videos which helped shaped the debate at the State Capitol. New supporters are being developed through new social media strategies like Thunderclap and Storify. Our constant drumbeat of messaging around the pre-K funding issue has made its way into local news coverage.

Other education work revolved around closing the achievement gap for underperforming students. AACF was on board as the Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Campaign held a successful Summit in October to share education information with parents across the state. AACF successfully worked to get the Academic Facilities Oversight Committee to recommend study of inequities in school facilities across the state. Their report
Championing after-school and summer programs

Efforts to convince policy makers and communities of the importance of these programs, and to provide money to fund the Positive Youth Development Grant Program Act, continue. This year the Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research endorsed quality after-school and summer programs as an effective way to reduce the education achievement gap. It suggested that the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) funds designed to close the education achievement gap be used for these programs in school districts across the state. ACF, the Arkansas Out-of-School Network, and the Northwest Arkansas Council, held a “study circle” process designed to get the community involved in discussions about afterschool and summer programs. The study circles were conducted in English, Spanish and Marshallese, and included business leaders, educators, activists, parents, students, law enforcement, elected officials, and service providers.

Reforming the juvenile justice system

ACF staff continues its campaign to reserve incarceration for youthful offenders who pose a serious risk to public safety by expanding proven effective community based alternatives to incarceration. AACF staff served on the Arkansas Supreme Courts Commission on Children, Youth and Families’ Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice Reform, participated in the Interim Study on Juvenile Justice Reform and served as a member of the Division of Youth Services Stakeholder Cabinet. All of these venues have now adopted recommendations or principles that suggest reforms which will accelerate enactment of this key policy change within Arkansas.

Reporting on child welfare

ACF released two reports on the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) efforts to implement a demonstration waiver from the federal government which will allow DCFS to redirect current funding. The goals of the waiver are to: (1) safely reduce the number of children entering foster care, (2) reduce the time spent in foster care, and (3) increase the stability of a child’s placement in foster care. During fiscal year 2014, there were 4,106 children in foster care. The two reports covered the first two goals and examined data from DCFS before the waiver was implemented along with describing the initiatives that DCFS will implement.

Fighting for a fair tax and budget system

ACF continues to prioritize increased financial stability for hardworking Arkansans and a fair and adequate tax structure. The final state budget passed during the fiscal session included about $89 million in savings due to the adoption of the Private Option health insurance exchange. Despite the savings from the Private Option and nearly $79 million in surplus general revenues, the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Youth Services – agencies that provide critical services to vulnerable children – saw no new funding. In 2014, ACF released infographics and blog pieces on issues like growing income inequality in Arkansas, wage theft, and the need for a state Earned Income Tax Credit and a higher minimum wage. In the November election, voters approved a ballot initiative to increase the minimum wage in Arkansas to $7.50 in 2015, $8.00 in 2016, and $8.50 in 2017.
Carrying out AACF’s mission in northwest Arkansas

All the priorities of AACF — from child welfare and juvenile justice to education and health — are the focus of our northwest Arkansas office based in Springdale. AACF’s only satellite office continues to provide a critical voice in a region with growing political clout. In the summer, we increased our staff capacity with a part-time position. While our work in northwest Arkansas covers the wide range of AACF’s issues, the office includes a special emphasis on improving the public understanding of the benefits of public investment. In 2014, we worked to raise regional awareness of after school programs and high-quality pre-K as well as immigrant children’s access to health care. Partnerships with the United Way of Northwest Arkansas and service providers strengthened AACF’s influence in the region.

Reaching out

The Arkansas Kids Count Coalition is “the collective force shaping public policy for children and families in Arkansas.” The coalition hosted Policy Café events in Malvern, Jonesboro, Little Rock, and Hot Springs. In Fayetteville, the coalition held a Children’s Advocacy Summit, during which participants examined policy issues and received training in advocacy skills, such as issue selection, coalition building, legislative activities, electoral politics, strategic communications, and other advocacy strategies.

In preparation for the 2015 legislative session, the coalition also sponsored pre-legislative conferences in Jonesboro (in partnership with Enroll the Ridge), northwest Arkansas, and Little Rock. Nearly 250 participants attended the conferences, which featured legislative and media panel discussions, as well as presentations by AACF staff members and other policy experts.

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2014 AACF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

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For the Year Ended December 31, 2014, From audited financials prepared by Thomas and Thomas LLP

EXPENSES

- Fundraising 13%
- Management and General 9%
- Program Services 79%

TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT

- Misc. 4%
- Interest and Investment Income 1%
- Contributions 14%
- Special Events 5%
- Grants 76%
2014 FUNDERS

Grant Funders ($5,000 and more)
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Arkansas Public Policy Panel
Center on Budget & Policy Priorities
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Community Catalyst, Inc.
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Early Childhood Funders’ Collaborative
Fred Darragh Foundation
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
Nathan Dalton Whetstone Endowment for Arkansas/ACF
Public Welfare Foundation
Riggs Benevolent Fund
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Schott Foundation for Public Education
Second Presbyterian Church
Southern Education Foundation
Stoneman Family Foundation
The New World Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

Organization Donors ($1,000 and more)
Acxiom
Adventures Subaru
Ambetter of Arkansas
American Academy of Pediatrics, Arkansas Chapter
Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield
Arkansas Community Foundation
Arkansas Children’s Hospital
Arkansas Education Association
Arkansas Hospital Association
Arkansas Minority Health Commission
Bank of the Ozarks
C. Louis & Mary C. Cabe Foundation
City of Little Rock
Catlett Law Firm
Cross, Gunter, Witherspoon & Galchus
Delta Dental of Arkansas
Endeavor Foundation
Entergy
Friday, Eldredge & Clark
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Innovative Solutions for Educational Partnerships
Legacy Termite and Pest Control, Inc.
Little Rock Pediatric Group, PA.
Mathews Management Company
McMath Woods, PA.
Mercy Northwest Arkansas
Mitchell, Williams, Selig, Gates & Woodyard, PLLC
Munro Foundation
Nabholz Construction Services
Olds Foundation
Pro-Kids Therapy, LLC
Southern Bancorp
The Schmieding Foundation
UAMS Department of Pediatrics
United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas
Walmart Foundation

Individual Donors ($1,000 and more)
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Representative Darrin Williams

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Jennifer Ferguson
Deputy Director

Jerri Derlikowski
Director of Education Policy and Finance

Tamika Edwards
Director of Governmental Affairs

Lynn Gemmell
Administrative Assistant

Christine Hartman
Northwest Arkansas Office Coordinator

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

Kim Reeve
Senior Policy Analyst

Kerri Michael Sernel
Outreach Director

Mallory Van Dover
Development Director

Eleanor Wheeler
Senior Policy Analyst

AACF staff
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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