



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

When I look back on the work we did at Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) in 2021, the word that comes to mind is *tenacity*. Year two of the COVID-19 pandemic had our staff continuing to adapt to a mostly virtual world as we worked with our partners, fellow advocates, and policymakers to advance our mission.

The 2021 state legislative session brought particular challenges, not only because we were conducting our advocacy work primarily virtually, but also because of the difficult political environment that brought many bills before the Legislature that would be harmful to children and families. Playing defense was an even greater priority than usual, as we fought to protect voting rights, equity in schools, and access to critical safety net programs. The year also saw the passage of major income tax cuts, opposed by AACF, that disproportionately favored wealthy taxpayers and corporations at the expense of future funding in the state budget for programs serving children and families.

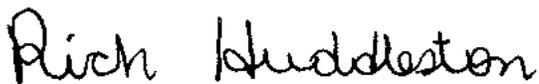
We monitored and tracked the impact of federal policy changes and new federal funding designed to lessen the impacts of the pandemic on state economies, state budgets, and the ability of families and workers to meet basic family economic needs. The passage of the American Rescue Plan gave us the opportunity to raise awareness about the programs Arkansans could access and to advocate on strategic state spending of federal dollars. The expanded Child Tax Credit brought timely relief to the families of hundreds of thousands of Arkansas's children, and we worked with national and state partners to spread the word about eligibility and how families could access the program.

In 2021, we continued to push for greater understanding of the need for strong early childhood education, low-income tax relief, juvenile justice reform, and improved access to health care coverage for postpartum women in low-income families.

AACF has learned to work smarter and more efficiently through our use of technology and online platforms, which will improve our ability to conduct advocacy in the future. We never stop working to be a powerful voice for children and families in Arkansas.

All of us at AACF remain thankful for your interest in our work. Our advocacy efforts are stronger because of friends and supporters like you.

Sincerely,



Rich Huddleston



LETTER FROM OUR DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Dear AACF Donors and Future Donors,

Arkansans want what's best for our children. We want kids to have happy, healthy lives. We want Arkansas to be a great place to be a child and raise a child.

We continue to call attention to the fact that our state budget does not provide the resources that all children need. As long as kids go to school hungry, as long as families don't have access to affordable health care, and as long as families remain in poverty, we will advocate for our state policymakers to do better.

Speaking up for the children of Arkansas is always important and at the center of what we do at AACF.

Our advocacy efforts are stronger because of you.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- **Vote.** And encourage your friends and neighbors to vote.
- **Advocate.** Reach out to your state and federal elected officials on the issues that are important to you.
- **Donate. Your contribution to AACF each year is critical. Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint.**

AACF had a strong fundraising year in 2021 thanks to a transformational matching grant from the Sandler Foundation. They pledged up to \$100,000 to match all new and increased donations received by the end of March 2022 towards unrestricted gifts, and we are on track to meet that challenge. This additional unrestricted funding gives us the capacity and flexibility to be fully staffed in critical areas such as racial equity and education.

Thank you to the many supporters who invest in our work. Individual, corporate and foundation donors and event sponsors provide critical funding to further our efforts on behalf of kids and families.

EVERY gift, from \$5 to \$100,000, is impactful. Together, we can make Arkansas a better place for children and families to lead healthy, productive lives.

Fran Carter
Development Director

Missy Darwin Kincaid
Northwest Arkansas Development Director

MONTHLY DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Give annually, or give monthly. A monthly gift may help you make a larger impact with your donation.

“I’m proud to support the mission of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families through monthly donations. Now, more than ever, we need the policy expertise of this organization to ensure that every citizen has access to information and services that will ensure they can thrive in our state. Knowing that my donation furthers this mission, gives me peace of mind as a native of Arkansas and a mother, that there are people advocating on behalf of our children and families.”

- *Rejena S. Grotjohn*



“I have been a monthly AACF donor for almost five years, and I consider it to be one of my best monthly investments. I know I can rely on AACF’s expertise and advocacy, and I value their efforts to ensure that all kids and their families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives. I am happy to support their ongoing efforts to make Arkansas a better place not just for my kids, but for ALL Arkansas children and families.”

- *Amanda Hoelzeman*

“As an ongoing monthly donor to Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, I believe in and appreciate their strong commitment to improve the lives of children and families in our state. AACF serves as a voice for many Arkansans by creating awareness, engaging communities, and informing public policy. I am pleased to support AACF as they continue to serve as a leader in advocacy work in Arkansas.”

- *Martha Hiatt*



YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

Annual unrestricted funding gives AACF the flexibility to work on new and emerging issues as they arise. It also provides more resources for building coalitions and lobbying on behalf of children at the state Capitol. Your support positions us to be even more effective advocates for Arkansas’s families. Visit aradvocates.org/donate to learn more.



2021 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RACIAL EQUITY

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic highlighted racial disparities in 2021. AACF focused on racial equity issues in a number of contexts, from fighting against bad legislation to studying how existing inequities in our society have been exacerbated during the pandemic. We shared patterns from the *2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, demonstrating the ways race and ethnicity influence kids' well-being in Arkansas, even prior to the pandemic. We highlighted the passage and signing of a new federal law that made Juneteenth a national holiday while calling for more attention to important legislation on voting rights. We looked at the effects of the pandemic on Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC) communities and its specific impact on hunger. And throughout the year we focused on how the state often lacks sufficient data on BIPOC communities, which we need to track well-being of children and families in those communities.

AACF BOARD-APPROVED RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

At AACF, our racial equity focus aligns our mission and stated values with our organizational practices and programs. We recognize that structural inequity has been embedded in our national and state culture and policies and has had a lasting effect, as seen today in disparities in children's outcomes across race and many other identities. AACF believes in intentionally engaging diverse perspectives throughout our work. We are committed to amplifying the voices and wisdom of those most directly affected by systemic oppression, with a focus on building a more equitable and inclusive Arkansas to truly serve every child and family.

STORYTELLING

The AACF health policy team was provided a great opportunity in 2021 to engage in a Medicaid story collection project entitled, Medicaid: The Lived Experience. Our main goal was to learn more about the strengths and opportunities for improvement within the Medicaid program. The project also focused



on amplifying the voices of historically excluded populations (the Marshallese community; African American/Black communities throughout the central, Delta, and southern areas of the state; and Hispanic/Latino communities), where higher rates of health disparities persist. Arkansans throughout the state shared their experiences with Medicaid and provided insight into where our health policy advocacy will be focused during 2022.

For Hunger Action Month in September, we interviewed and shared the stories of families who use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program to provide healthy food for their children. We also collected stories from organizations and advocates working to ensure that all families have adequate nutrition, with the aim of highlighting the importance of SNAP for more than 320,000 Arkansans.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year was a busy one for child advocates, who were not only trying to ensure the immediate needs of children were being addressed, but also trying to ensure that laws reflected the interests of children. The Arkansas Kids Count Coalition, a membership group organized by AACF, kicked off the year with its first virtual Kids Count Week “at” the Capitol, where hundreds of child advocates working on a wide range of issues joined together online to prepare for the 93rd General Assembly. With a contentious regular session and two special sessions, there was no shortage of bills for advocates to tackle. More than 1,500 emails and phone calls were made to state legislators in response to AACF’s action alerts.



As the pandemic continued, AACF and the Kids Count Coalition worked hard to get critical policy information to advocates, hosting 27 events and providing 50 presentations to interested groups. We discussed everything from the issues facing early childhood educators during the pandemic, to how SNAP/Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) recipients could advocate for themselves at the Department of Human Services, to the impact of the federal American Rescue Plan in Arkansas.

HEALTH

In 2021, the health policy team tirelessly advocated during the legislative session for bills that would improve access to healthcare services for children and families throughout Arkansas. Despite many setbacks, there were some legislative wins. We celebrated the passage of the Medicaid appropriations bill, which solidified the renewal of the Medicaid Expansion for adults with lower incomes. And we were

AACF LEADS WORKSHOPS ON HOW TO ADVOCATE.

If you would like to schedule a training for your group or organization, please call 501-371-9678 or email connect@aradvocates.org.

relieved at the defeat of the bill aiming to reduce the “soda pop tax,” which would have negatively impacted the Medicaid Trust Fund.

Our AACF health policy team focused on understanding the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities throughout the state. In 2021, we participated in local, state, and national forums, conferences and coalitions to monitor policy changes related to the national- and state-declared public health emergency. We also began to prepare for the end of the public health emergency determination, to ensure that Arkansas’s most vulnerable populations are informed about changes that may affect their health coverage status.

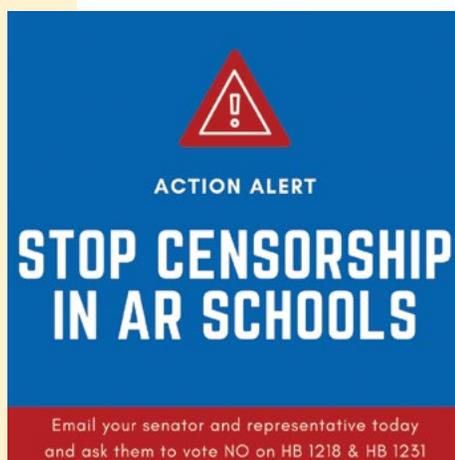
We remained centered on the promotion of health equity and the steady decline of children covered by health insurance throughout the state. We are vigilant against any threats to coverage and access for children and families within the Arkansas Medicaid program with the impending changes to the Arkansas Medicaid Expansion program and as the end of the public health emergency nears.

EDUCATION

A major focus in 2021 for education was shaping the state’s education response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The American Rescue Plan brought in historic levels of one-time funding for both K-12 education and early childhood education. We published a guide for parents and community members highlighting how each person can advocate for an effective and fair use of the \$1.2 billion in American Rescue Plan funding that went to K-12 schools. We also published an analysis of the Child Care

Development Fund state plans from FY 2019-2021 and FY 2022-2024. In addition to that analysis, the brief included policy recommendations for the spending of American Rescue Plan funds.

During the 93rd General Assembly, we helped defeat a major private school voucher bill that would have reduced funding for public education. We will stay focused in 2022 on an equitable implementation of incoming federal funding, school discipline reform, and assessing equity gaps in both K-12 and early childhood education.



JUVENILE JUSTICE

During the 2021 legislative session, we worked with partners to introduce legislation to address the issue of fees and fines in juvenile courts, which ultimately did not pass. Arkansas law gives juvenile court judges significant authority to levy fees and fines on families with youth in the juvenile justice system, and there is a national trend to limit their use, as research shows they pose a disproportionate economic impact

on low-income families, BIPOC families, and rural communities. One of the main objections to the bill's passage was the lack of information about the use of fees and fines in the Arkansas juvenile court system. An interim legislative study is being conducted in 2022 to collect data to shed light on these unanswered questions.



TAX AND BUDGET + ECONOMIC SECURITY

During the 2021 legislative session, AACF successfully advocated against legislation that would have shortened the duration of Arkansas unemployment benefits for Arkansans to be the shortest in the nation. Another important accomplishment was working with partners to end the “pre-trial deposit” requirement for renters facing eviction, ensuring that more tenants will be able to fight unfair evictions on a more even playing field. And we worked hard to get state-EITC legislation introduced to establish a state Earned Income Tax Credit, though it was not ultimately successful.

During the special session to cut taxes, we generated interest that translated into numerous media interviews and appearances, which gave us the opportunity to share information on the inequitable distribution of the proposed tax cuts' benefits. While the tax cuts passed, we helped shift the public conversation toward using limited public resources to invest in Arkansans, rather than cutting taxes.



FOOD SECURITY

Throughout 2021, we looked at hunger and the role the pandemic played in exacerbating what was already a crisis of hunger throughout the United States and Arkansas. With our partners at the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, we hosted a virtual lobbying day to connect local advocates with Arkansas's federal delegation. Staff from the U.S. Senate Agricultural Committee heard about the issues that Arkansans face. Bringing Arkansas's stories to our elected officials in Washington, D.C., is critical, as the Committee will soon begin working on the renewal of the Farm Bill, which includes the largest anti-hunger program in the United States, SNAP.



WE CAN REDUCE
CHILD POVERTY
BY MORE THAN **40%**

PROGRESS IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

Our only regional office, based in Springdale, continued its work to support the statewide mission of AACF. During the legislative session, our Northwest Arkansas



Medicaid Equity for Marshallese

staff helped ensure speedy implementation of new Medicaid eligibility for all Arkansans who were born in the Marshall Islands. While this is a long-awaited opportunity for better health for one of the state's largest immigrant populations, implementation has been slow with a lengthy and troublesome backlog of applications that we are urging state officials to alleviate.

With our partner organizations in Northwest Arkansas, we helped fight for better job opportunities for immigrants with new state laws that allow Arkansans with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status to earn licenses to work in

a variety of new fields. Most importantly, those with DACA status can now obtain teachers' licenses, which will benefit not only their career opportunities but the children they serve in schools throughout the state.

Our regional staff continues to work with lawmakers, influencers and our coalition partners to alleviate the effects of poverty and racial injustice in a region known for economic prosperity. Disparities in children's outcomes persist in



Northwest Arkansas just as they do in the rest of the state. As the 2020 Census confirmed, the region's population and political clout continue to grow, so the need for advocacy in this region is as essential as ever.

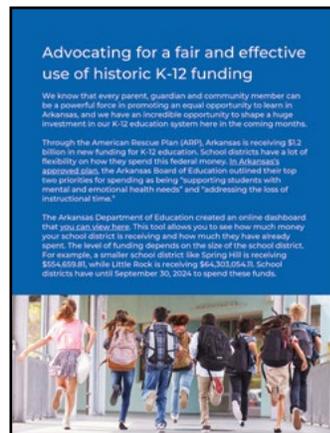
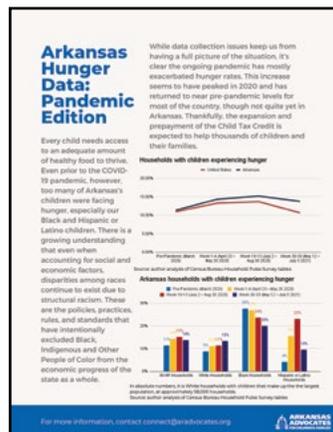
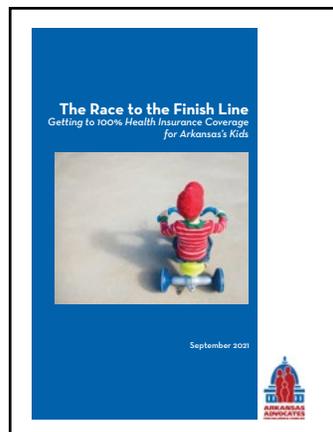
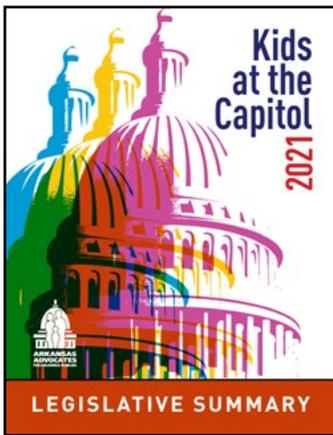


COMMUNICATIONS

In 2021, AACF published 65 blog posts, sent 13 press releases, published 31 videos, and sent 34 e-newsletters.

Our staff and communications products were mentioned in local, statewide, national, and international media 584 times in 2021.

PUBLICATIONS



FOLLOW US ON OUR SOCIAL CHANNELS

- facebook.com/aradvocates
- twitter.com/aacf
- @aradvocates

2021 Digital Followers

Twitter

6,347

Facebook

10,168

Instagram

1,490

SOUP SUNDAY

LITTLE ROCK



2021 Soup Goes Virtual!



Sunday, Feb. 21
6 PM



Central Arkansas
Restaurant Specials
ALL MONTH LONG



Sidney Leasure
Event Chair

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

Soup Sunday serves as one of the best events in Northwest Arkansas year after year, bringing chefs and the community together with the pure intention of enjoying soup and celebrating AACE.

— JERRY GAWTHROP
WOODSTONE CRAFT PIZZA



AACE Northwest Arkansas Director Laura Kellams "attends" Northwest Arkansas Soup Sunday from her home in Fayetteville.



AACE Northwest Arkansas Development Director Missy Darwin Kincaid awards the Golden Ladle to Jerry Gawthrop of Woodstone Craft Pizza.

FRIENDS OF CHILDREN ANNUAL LUNCHEON



2021 Friend of Children JoAnn Nalley with AACF Executive Director Rich Huddleston.

(Photo at right) AACF Board of Directors Member and luncheon emcee Ryan Davis.



At our 2021 Friends of Children Annual Luncheon, AACF was privileged to honor JoAnn Nalley, Dr. José R. Romero and Rhonda Sanders for their important work on behalf of our state's children, and for all they have done to ensure that kids in Arkansas have the resources and opportunities they need to be healthy and successful.



2021 AACF Board President Dr. Gary Wheeler with 2021 Friend of Children Dr. José R. Romero.



Dr. Gary Wheeler and Rich Huddleston with 2021 Friend of Children Rhonda Sanders.



2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Gary Wheeler, M.D.

VICE PRESIDENT

Ryan D. Davis

SECRETARY

Martie North

TREASURER

Danyelle Walker, J.D.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Joseph (Hank) Bates, III, J.D.

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Sheldon Riklon, M.D.

Shannon Collier-Tenison, Ph.D.

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Jay Barth, Ph.D.

Xochitl Delgado Solorzano

Nikki Edge, Ph.D.

Hershey Garner, J.D., M.D.

Greg Hale

Susan Sullivan Miller, M.D.

Rev. Natasha Murray-Norman

Tamara P. Glover, Ph.D.

Rejena S. Grotjohn, J.D.

Chad Rodgers, M.D.

William (Bill) Schwab, Ph.D.

Aaron Strong, M.D.

Stacey Sturner

Pastor Dwight Townsend

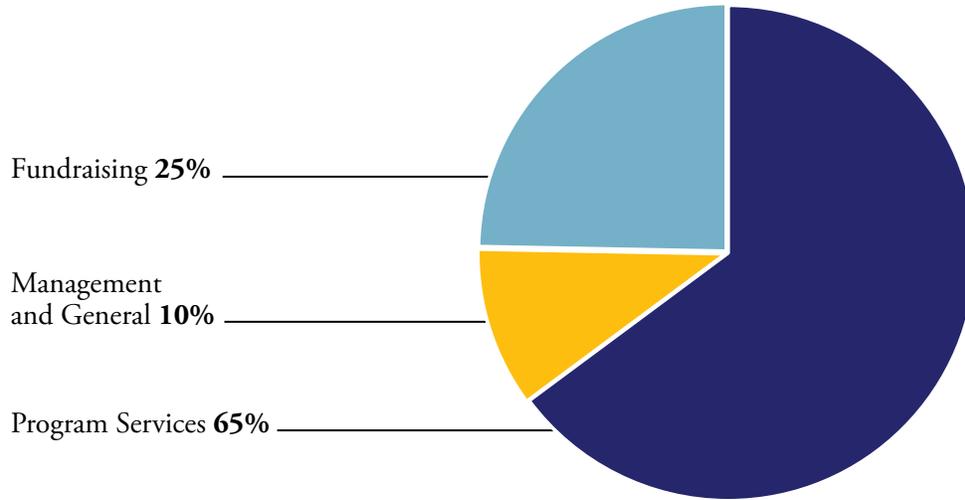


2021 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

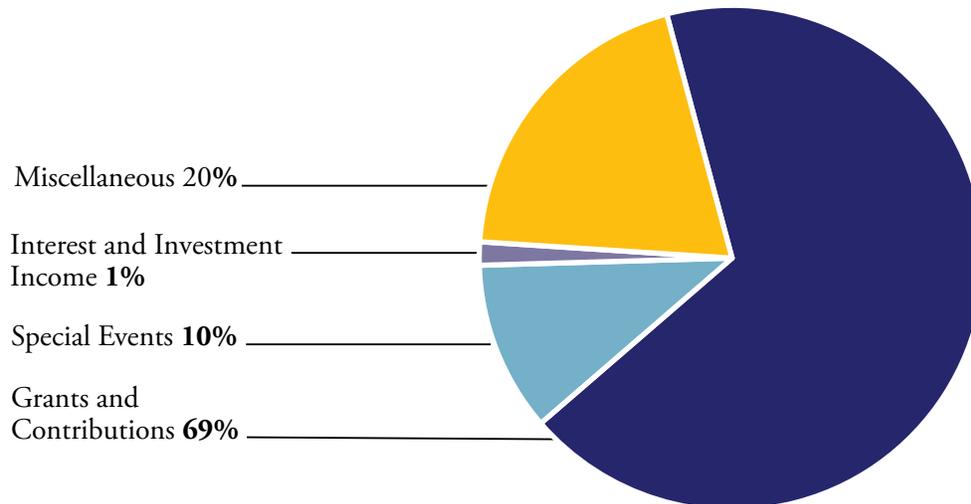
Total Revenue & Support.....	2,261,127
Total Expenses.....	1,629,283
Increase in Net Assets without Donor Restriction.....	631,844
Increase in Net Assets with Donor Restriction.....	262,860
Increase in Total Net Assets	894,704
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	1,685,769
Net Assets, End of Year.....	2,580,473

For the Year Ended December 31, 2021
 From audited financials prepared by Landmark PLC

EXPENSES



TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT



2021 FUNDERS

\$5,000+ GRANT FUNDERS

Alliance for Early Success
American Heart Association
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Asset Funders Network
Center on Budget & Policy Priorities
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
David & Lucile Packard Foundation
Economic Policy Institute
Excellerate Foundation
Fred Darragh Foundation
HLB Universal Healthcare Trust
Marguerite Casey Foundation
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Partnership for America's Children
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Robin Hood Foundation
The Walmart Foundation, Inc.
Windgate Foundation
Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

\$5,000+ ORGANIZATIONS

Arkansas Children's
Arkansas Community Foundation
(ARCF)
Delta Dental of Arkansas
Hunt Ventures
The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas
Nathan Dalton Whetstone Endowment
for Arkansas Children's Charities/
ARCF
Second Presbyterian Church
Walmart

\$1,000 TO \$4,999 ORGANIZATIONS

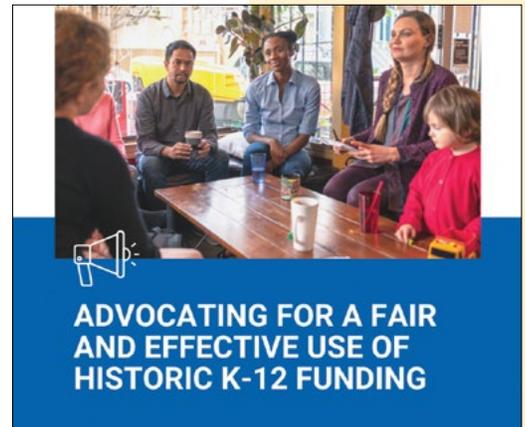
Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield
Arkansas Electric Cooperative
Corporation
Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care
Arkansas Health & Wellness
Arkansas Hospital Association
Arkansas Minority Health Commission
Arkansas State University
Arvest Bank
The Bradberry Family Foundation
The Centers
C. Louis & Mary C. Cabe Foundation
Dillard's
Entergy Arkansas
Garver USA
Hachem Investments, Inc.
The Law Office of Tod Yeslow
Legacy Termite and Pest Control, Inc.
Little Rock Pediatric Group, P.A.
Munro Foundation
Nabholz Construction Corporation
Ozarks Electric Cooperative
Pulaski Heights United Methodist
Church
Roberts Family Foundation/ARCF
Roger and Patty Harness Family
Foundation
Schmieding Foundation
Simmons Bank
Underwoods Fine Jewelers
William H. Bowen Family Foundation
Wright, Lindsey & Jennings, LLP



\$1,000+ INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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Pam and David Parks

Dr. and Mrs. Don
Pederson
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Jana and Chris Villemez
Mary Ellen Vogler
Drs. Rebecca and Gary Wheeler
Kirk Wilson
Jeremiah and Emily Wood
Linda L. Wray
Michelle and Larry Wright



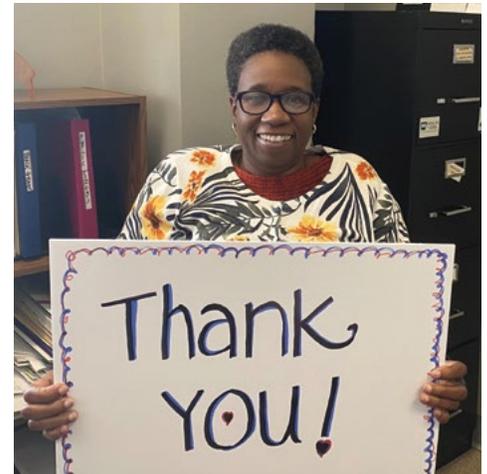
ARCF designation after a name indicates that they donated through the Arkansas Community Foundation.

Thank you to all funders whose generous investment in our work helps us serve children and families in Arkansas.

If you would like to make a donation, please visit our website at aradvocates.org/ donate.

AACF 2021 STAFF

Rich Huddleston,
Executive Director
Jennifer Ferguson,
Deputy Director
Loretta Alexander,
Health Policy Director
Nastassja Campbell,
Northwest Arkansas Intern
Fran Carter,
Development Director
Brooke Edwards,
Communications Director
Michelle Faucher,
Northwest Arkansas Intern
Maricella Garcia,
Race Equity Director for Policy
Olivia Gardner,
Education Policy Director
Alexis Gershon,
Health Policy Intern
CaSandra Glover,
Health Policy Fellow
Christine Hartman,
Northwest Arkansas Office Coordinator
Alyssa Jones,
Education Policy Intern
Laura Kellams,
Northwest Arkansas Director
Missy Darwin Kincaid,
Northwest Arkansas Development Director
Lindsey Lamb,
Little Rock Office Coordinator
Bruno Showers,
Senior Policy Analyst
Jose Vazquez,
Administrative & Finance Director
Rebecca Zimmermann,
Community Engagement Director



*For more
on issues
important
to children
and families,
visit
aradvocates.org*



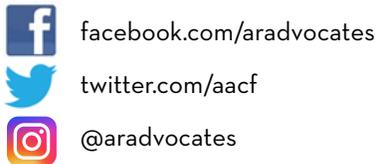


Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Main Office:
Union Station
1400 W. Markham St., Suite 306
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 371-9678

Northwest Arkansas Office:
614 E. Emma Avenue, Suite 235
Springdale, AR 72764
(479) 927-9800

Learn more at
www.aradvocates.org



STOP
VOTING RIGHTS
RESTRICTIONS



EMAIL YOUR
LAWMAKER
NOW

OPPOSE SB 485

We're going live



6:00 PM Tonight



September 8
1 PM

**FEDERAL HUNGER ADVOCACY
VIRTUAL WORKSHOP**

Presented by Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance &
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families