



A N N U A L R E P O R T • 2 0 0 9

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2009 was a demanding year for Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

We spent much of the year working to make us a more effective advocacy organization. We developed a new strategic plan—with new goals and priorities—to help guide and focus our work in the new decade. We worked with our partners to assess our strengths and weaknesses and take steps to make us better advocates in years to come.



Executive Director Rich Huddleston (right) with Freeman McKindra.

We are proud of the new ways we're communicating with our friends, partners, media and the public. We launched a new blog (ARVoices) and renovated our website. We also embraced the social media tools Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube to reach new audiences for our work. The number of fans and friends on these sites is growing rapidly.

We continued our work on key issues such as expanding access to health care coverage for uninsured children, energizing the early childhood education community, improving the quality of after-school and summer programs, monitoring reforms of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and working to make the state and federal tax system better for vulnerable families.

2009 continued to pose economic challenges for the state's families and state policy makers, with mounting job losses, declining state tax revenues, and cuts to the state budgets. We stepped up our efforts to ensure that Arkansas policy makers take a more balanced approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable families during the economic recession.

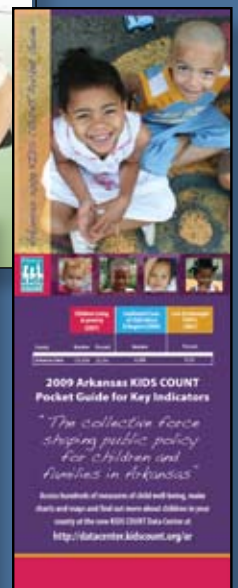
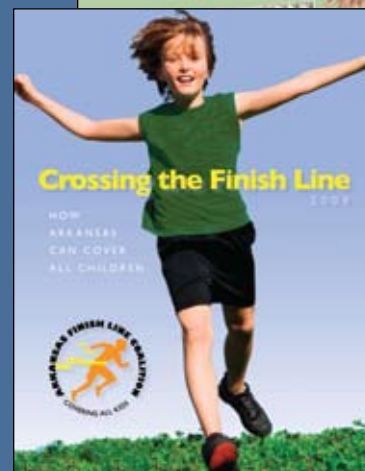
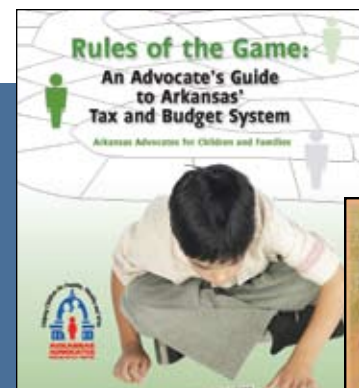
We want to thank Freeman McKindra, our outgoing 2009 board president. During his six years on the board, Freeman was committed to taking on the tough and controversial issues when the needs of vulnerable and minority children were being threatened.

In the months ahead, the commitment of advocates like Freeman will be more important than ever. With state and federal revenues declining, major decisions will be made that could change the lives of Arkansas children. Working with our partners and state policymakers, we must ensure that their voices be heard.

Rich Huddleston

2009 AACF PUBLICATIONS

- Crossing the Finish Line 2009: How Arkansas Can Cover All Children
- Rules of the Game: An Advocate's Guide to the Arkansas Tax and Budget System
- Kids at the Capitol: 2009 Legislative Summary
- Unbalanced: How Our Tax and Budget Systems Hurt Arkansas Children and Families
- Rabid Refunds: Refund Anticipation Loans and High Tax Preparation Fees Are Picking the Pockets of Arkansas's Working Families
- Arkansas Finish Line Coalition Brochure
- Arkansas KIDS COUNT Pocket Guide for Key Indicators
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: What's in it for Arkansas Children and Families?
- ARRA Funding for Education in Arkansas: A Jump Start for Moving From Adequacy to Excellence
- ARRA and Arkansas: Recommendations for Improving the Health of Children and Families
- Welfare Reform Redux: ARRA's Potential to Help Arkansas Families in Financial Crisis
- Unemployment Insurance and ARRA: An Overdue Win for Arkansas Families



Working for Kids at the Capitol

The 2009 legislative session resulted in many wins for children and families. In partnership with coalition partners and child advocates across the state, AACF made progress on several legislative priorities. A 56 cent tax on cigarettes narrowly passed both chambers to help decrease smoking and raise funds to support a comprehensive health care initiative. The package included:

- **Extending ARKids First child health insurance to families making up to 250 percent of the federal poverty line, making 8,000 more children eligible and supporting a total of 20,000 more children. The expansion was pending as of early 2010 because of negotiations between the state and federal government.**
- **Creating new slots for Medicaid-supported substance abuse treatment for pregnant women and adolescents.**
- **Initiating coordinated school health programs, which use schools as vehicles to improve child health by coordinating health care access, extending community partnerships and promoting healthy behavior among students and families.**

Children also saw wins beyond health care. The child welfare system received new funding and improved standards to help children as they turn 18 while still in the system. Lawmakers created a Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and Promoting Economic Opportunity to make recommendations for the 2011 session to move families out of poverty and toward self-sufficiency. To top it off, Arkansas roadways and travelers are safer thanks to new seatbelt laws, a texting ban and teen driving restrictions.

Crossing the Finish Line to Covering More Kids

AACF and our partners in the Arkansas Finish Line Coalition picked quite a day to hold an outdoor rally and footrace at the Capitol for expanding ARKids First coverage. We rallied on the steps on the morning of Feb. 6 and then went inside to witness a landmark vote on increasing the tobacco tax in the House. Advocates poured into the doors of the Capitol to line the stairs up to the House chamber. Revenue from the tax is intended to support ARKids First expansion and an array of other health programs crucial for kids and families. “Crossing the Finish Line 2009: How Arkansas Can Cover all Kids,” the first in a series of AACF annual reports on the state of children’s health insurance, helped advocates make the case for the expansion.

Tracking Children in Foster Care

After the deaths of several children in the foster-care system and finding it difficult to get information about these deaths, AACF worked to pass legislation in the 2009 session to require the Division of Children and Families Services to release more information when a child dies or nearly dies in its care. DCFS must now disclose on its website within 72 hours certain types of information when a report to the child abuse hot line is made or when a death or near death occurs in its custody. Once the investigation is finalized, additional information is also required to be released.



Arkansas Kids Count Coalition members line the steps of the Arkansas House of Representatives before a critical vote to raise the tobacco tax.

Keeping Families in the Center of State Tax and Budget Systems

AACF's tax and budget team worked with several partners to host "The Basics of Life Family Economic Security Conference" in November. Workshops focused on many issues that threaten the economic security of working families. Keynote speaker Nick Johnson of the Washington D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities addressed the nationwide crisis in state budgets. A highlight of the conference was participation in a poverty simulation that drew attention to the difficulty working families face trying to get by. AACF also continued to engage the faith community through presentations, social justice sermons and Children's Sabbaths held in several communities throughout the state.

AACF released two tax-related publications, "Unbalanced: How our Tax and Budget System Hurts Arkansas Children and Families" and "Rules of the Game: An Advocate's Guide to the Arkansas Tax and Budget System," which both focused on explaining the current tax structure and how it affects working families. We also released "Rabid Refunds: Refund Anticipation Loans and the High Tax Preparation Fees Are Picking the Pockets of Arkansas's Working Families" which drew much attention from the tax preparation field.



Gov. Mike Beebe signs a bill to extend ARKids First to more uninsured children. Behind him are AACF's Rich Huddleston and Elisabeth Wright Burak.

Making New Connections on Federal Work

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and national health reform dominated AACF's federal policy and advocacy work. Our Federal Budget Project made great strides in educational advocacy with our Congressional delegation. We developed and deployed AACF's first state-wide grass tops advocacy network, the Moving Families Forward Advisory Council. This group of state-wide leaders wrote letters and made phone calls to our congressional members and staff. We prepared a series of issue briefs to present options for how ARRA funds should be spent to help low income and vulnerable children and families. Another new area was our work in alleviating the potential impact of climate change legislation on low- and middle-income families. We also had the great honor this year to be invited to address the Senate Agriculture Committee in Washington, D.C., as it prepared to reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act.

Members of AACF's growing tax and budget grassroots network participated in conference calls on the recovery package and national health reform; convened the first Northwest Arkansas policy briefing and panel discussion with Congressional staff members; and participated in sign-on letters to our congressional delegation. We met face-to-face with Senators Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor and Representatives John Boozman, Mike Ross, and Vic Snyder to discuss federal policy priorities and their impact on Arkansas low- and moderate-income children and families.

Reigniting the Early Education Movement

AACF kicked off a rejuvenation of our pre-k coalition with a one-day conference for business leaders held in Little Rock. Gov. Mike Beebe opened the meeting, which was designed to show how investing in high-quality early childhood education provides economic security to local and state businesses and economies. We also held a series of focus groups around the state with local program providers and coalition partners to get a sense of the needs of the pre-k community and what policy goals we should all pursue during the 2011 legislative session.

Supporting After-school and Summer Programs

Working in partnership with the Arkansas Out of School Network, AACF helped implement some of the 2008 recommendations made by the Governor’s Task Force on Best Practices for Afterschool and Summer Programs. During the 2009 legislative session more than \$312,000 in general improvement funds were approved for out-of-school time projects. The governor also set aside more than \$500,000 in stimulus funds to build the state’s afterschool professional development system and improve the quality of after-school and summer programs in the state. Establishing these high quality standards and a professional workforce will make these programs more effective and accessible when the state’s revenue outlook improves.

Closing the Addiction Treatment Gap

In 2009 the state agreed to use Medicaid funds to provide substance abuse treatment to pregnant women and youth. The increase in the cigarette tax provided \$5 million in matching funds to draw up to \$18 million in state and federal funds to serve these vulnerable populations. In addition, ten new juvenile drug courts were established to reach youth when they enter the juvenile justice system. However, there is much more that needs to be done to reach the more than 150,000 Arkansans who need treatment and recovery services but can’t get it because the system is overwhelmed, their insurance doesn’t pay for it or they can’t afford treatment.

There for Kids: Arkansas Kids Count Coalition

AACF provides staff support to this coalition of more than forty organizations with a mission to be “the collective force shaping public policy for children and families in Arkansas.” During the legislative session coalition members received weekly legislative updates. Our series of advocacy training academies, regional policy forums, and other legislative events kept child advocates across the state well informed so that they could participate in the legislative process.



Soup Sunday Committee Chairman Dr. Chad Rogers (center), with committee members Lila Niswanger, Aimee Berry and Missy Duke.

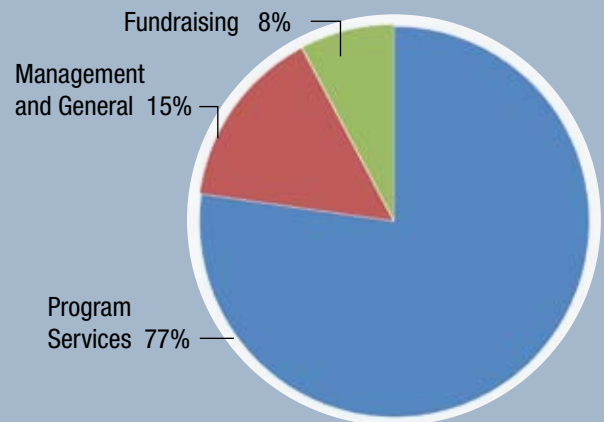
2009 AACF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total Revenue & Support.....	1,562,247
Total Expenses.....	1,411,710
Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets	150,537
Decrease in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	(139,880)
Change in Net Assets	10,657
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	867,914
Net Assets, End of Year	878,571

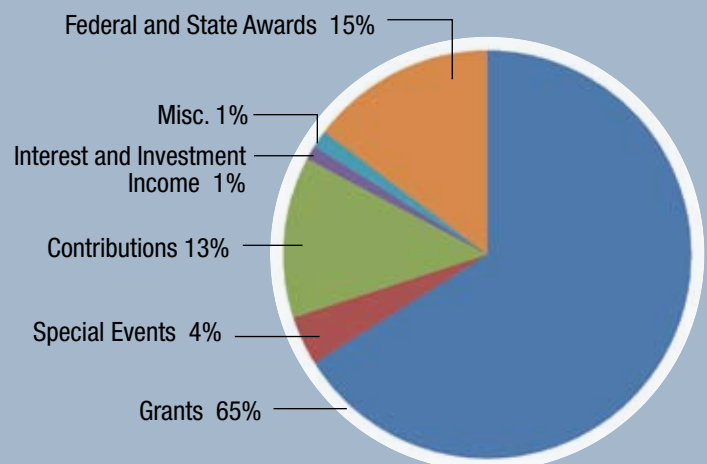
For the Year Ended December 31, 2009

From audited financials prepared by Thomas and Thomas LLP

EXPENSES



TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT



Declaring the End of Payday Lending

Arkansans Against Abusive Payday Lending (AAAPL) declared the end of payday lending at a Little Rock press conference held in front of one of the last payday lenders to close in Arkansas. The announcement came eight months after the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that a 1999 payday lending industry-drafted law violated the Arkansas Constitution and 16 months after Arkansas Attorney General Dustin McDaniel initiated a decisive crackdown on the industry.



NWA Soup Sunday volunteers dish up soups, chilis and gumbos.

Growing Roots in Northwest Arkansas

AACF's Springdale office continued growing our community of advocates in Northwest Arkansas in 2009, its first full year of operation. We launched a regional federal policy network in a new partnership with the United Way of Northwest Arkansas at an event attended by Congressional staff members from the offices of Sens. Lincoln and Pryor and Congressman Boozman. A regional post-legislative conference brought in more than 75 advocates and eight lawmakers from

Washington and Benton counties. AACF's new regional office is reaching out to faith leaders, the immigrant community, education officials and health advocates to build partnerships that will advance policy priorities for children and families. Attendance at Northwest Arkansas Soup Sunday doubled in size last year, and in October, more than 100 people attended a Fayetteville party to learn more about AACF's mission.

2009 FUNDERS*

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Arkansas Children's Hospital
Arkansas Community Foundation
Arkansas Department
of Human Services
Center on Budget and
Policy Priorities
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Children's Leadership Council
Senator David Johnson
Campaign Fund

David and Lucile Packard Foundation
David and Pamela Parks
First Focus
Foundation for the Mid South
Gil Buchanan's Estate
Harvey and Bernice Jones Charitable
Trust
Nathan Dalton Whetstone
Endowment
Mary Reynolds Babcock
Foundation

Open Society Institute
Pew Charitable Trusts
Riggs Benevolent Fund
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.

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Elisabeth Wright Burak, Health Policy and
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Tara Manthey, Communications Director

Malisa Morris, Administrative Assistant

Candice Smith, Federal Budget and Tax
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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.



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