



a newsletter for child advocates

spring 2009

Voices Director Named to Poverty Task Force

Governor Timothy Kaine has named Voices Executive Director John Morgan to the newly-formed Governor's Poverty Reduction Task Force. The group will study the causes and scope of poverty in the Commonwealth and recommend steps to reduce poverty and promote economic opportunity for all Virginians.

"I am honored and very pleased to be part of this effort which has the potential to lift many families and children out of poverty," said Morgan. "I commend the administration for recognizing the need for meaningful action and for launching this effort"

Voices for Virginia's Children recently warned of rising childhood poverty in a paper released jointly with the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, "Predicting Poverty in the Commonwealth." The paper, available at www.vakids.org, forecasts that increased unemployment will push as many as 73,000 Virginia children into poverty, on top of the almost quarter of a million children currently growing up poor.

"Extended poverty is the single most hazardous risk factor for children," indicates Morgan.

And recession-induced poverty often is long-lasting – research indicates that

many children thrown into poverty during a recession will still be poor years later.

"Right around the corner, then," according to Morgan, "is the alarming prospect of thousands of additional children exposed to the multiple risks of long-term poverty. This increases the urgency and potential impact of the Task Force."

The Task Force will be co-chaired by Kaine's Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Marilyn B. Tavenner, and Robert Grey, a prominent Richmond attorney and past president of the American Bar Association. Grey is a partner at Hunton & Williams.

The group will launch its year-long effort at a "Poverty Summit" May 7 in Richmond. Leaders from business, the faith community, helping agencies, and other sectors will be joined by policy experts in economics, workforce development, housing, health care and other fields to explore potential poverty reduction approaches.

Voices will provide Task Force updates on its website, www.vakids.org.

We champion public policies that improve the lives of Virginia's children.



From the Executive Director

John Morgan



Kids – A Higher Priority?

This year Voices celebrates its 15th year of making Kids Count in Virginia. We are grateful to have worked with so many of you through the years to advocate on behalf of the Commonwealth's children. "Making Kids a Higher Priority" is the rallying cry for our work at Voices. Together, we persuade leaders and the public to put the needs of children first.

How are we doing? Are children becoming a higher priority? We believe so and here's why:

At the 2008 General Assembly session, the items highest on Voices' legislative agenda were strongly supported by the governor and approved with bi-partisan legislative support: child care assistance for low-income working parents, the Virginia Preschool Initiative, and foster care reforms. In 2009, at the urging of Voices and others, the administration and the legislature made children a high priority despite the dire budget situation, choosing to preserve safety net services needed to protect kids during the recession. Legislators were also quick to support our call to undo the proposed closure of state-run mental health facilities for children and adolescents.

Two successive governors have championed children's initiatives. Governor Warner fought to expand health coverage for children, and also created the Virginia Health Care Foundation and Virginia Early Childhood Foundation – both greatly benefit children. Governor Kaine has been a strong champion of early childhood causes; he pushed successfully for VPI expansion, and created the Office of Early Childhood Development.

While Attorney General, Bob McDonnell issued an opinion condemning the practice of "custody relinquishment": parents having to give up custody of their children to the state to access desperately needed mental health treatment. And the General Assembly, led by Delegate William Fralin, followed up by passing legislation to outlaw this practice, a policy change long-sought by Voices.

Increasingly, business and corporate leaders support children's policy initiatives as well. Perhaps most notably, strong business leadership has been instrumental in making the case to expand and improve early childhood services.

In 2001 Virginia ranked 19th among the 50 states on the Kids Count measure of overall child well-being. We now rank 15th – a sign of progress and another indication that kids may now be a higher priority. Do we have farther to go? Absolutely. As the 7th most prosperous state, Virginia has the capacity, if it chooses, to address some remaining unmet needs. Infant mortality, child mental health services, juvenile justice reform and access to quality early care and education for low-income children are domains where further progress is necessary – and feasible.

We believe "Making Kids a Higher Priority" is gaining momentum. Here's how you can help to honor our first 15 years and keep the momentum going:

- Respond to our "Action Alerts" – take the few minutes required to contact an official to state your view. The more people who write or call, the greater the likelihood of success, because your call means "I want kids to be a priority".
- Strengthen Voices through your financial support. Foundation giving will diminish until the recession ends; until then we are more dependent than ever before on the generosity of individuals who care about children. Your gift today will keep us strong, and make kids a higher priority.

New KIDS COUNT Data Center Launched

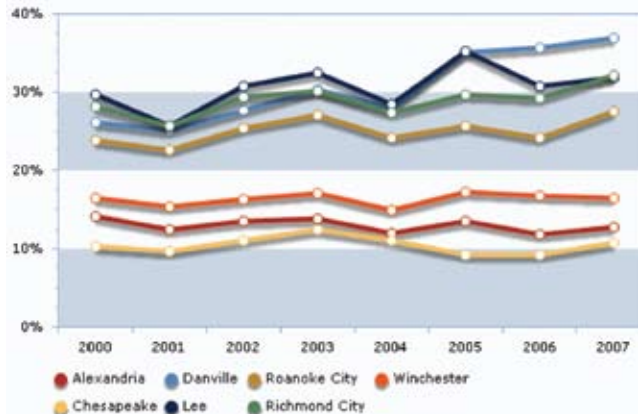
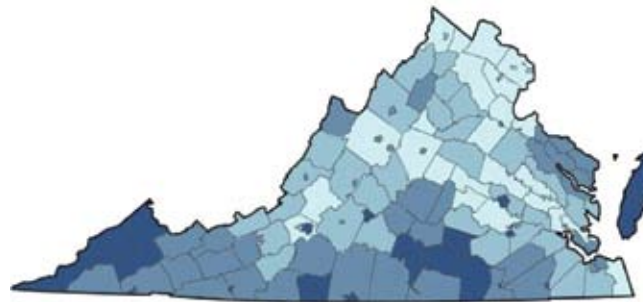
Voices is pleased to announce the launch of an improved version of its KIDS COUNT online data center. Since 1999, Voices has provided the only comprehensive source of data on children's well-being in Virginia through its KIDS COUNT system, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The new KIDS COUNT data center, released in late March, makes accessing and portraying data easier than ever.

This KIDS COUNT data center replaces the previous Community Level Information on Kids System (CLIKS). It contains the same indicators of child well-being at both statewide and locality levels, re-organized into five domains:

- Demographics
- Education
- Economic Well Being
- Health
- Safety and Risky Behaviors

One exciting feature of the new data center is the ability to create ranked tables, graphs and maps that can be linked directly to the user's website or shared through email. Additionally, most of the raw data now can be downloaded. "These enhancements take the system to the next level – from good to great," according to Frank Beylotte, KIDS COUNT Director at Voices. "It's even friendlier and easier than before, with better tools for finding, organizing and reporting the data. Even veteran users will be amazed by the new functions."

Access the new data center at www.vakids.org. For more information, contact Frank Beylotte at frank@vakids.org or 804-649-0184 x22.



Virginia Child Poverty Rates (ages birth – 17), 2007

Examples of enhancements in new KIDS COUNT Data Center. At the top is a user-designed map displaying 2007 child poverty rates for every Virginia locality. The bottom item is a custom-designed graph depicting changes in child poverty rates over time for various Virginia localities – users can graph any indicator over time for up to seven localities per graph.



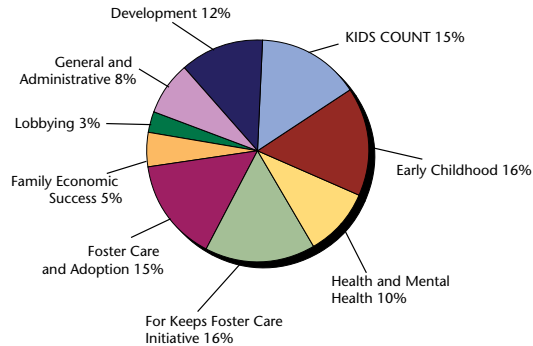
2008 Annual Report Summary

2008 Financial Information

Summarized Information (Unaudited)

Total Assets	\$256,870
Total Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$ 7,027
Total Amounts Held For Others	\$ 90,021
Total Support and Revenue	\$ 645,502
Total Expenses	\$646,201

Operating Expenses By Program



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We are grateful to the following, whose generous contributions strengthen our voice for the children of Virginia.

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Special thanks to Virginia authors Lee Smith, David Baldacci, and Sharyn McCrumb. And very special thanks to a special friend – author Adriana Trigiani.

Artwork created by youth in Virginia's foster care system as part of the Voices' cosponsored Voices for Change art contest.

Falls Church - McLean
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Newport News Parks and Recreation
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RE Lee Memorial Episcopal Church, Lexington
Roanoke College
Shelly Bechtel Shepherd
Beth Shumaker, BW Wilson Paper Company
Trinity United Methodist Church, Big Stone Gap



Voices Partners With The Early Care and Education Collaborative

Voices is one of six nonprofits awarded a grant in January by The Early Care and Education Funders Collaborative, a partnership created by the Washington Area Women's Foundation. The purpose of the grants is to expand access to and improve the quality of early care and education for low-income children in the Washington metro region.

"Voices will use the funding to ensure that policy and decision makers in Northern Virginia have the data, expert analysis, and policy recommendations they need to champion early care and education initiatives," said Kathy May, Director of Voices Northern Virginia office. Voices will target policy changes that increase access to preschool and other quality early care experiences for disadvantaged children and that help low-income working parents access quality, reliable child care.

Launched last October by The Women's Foundation, the Collaborative is a multi-year partnership between foundations and corporations to improve early care and education programs. Members of the Collaborative intend to create meaningful systemic change

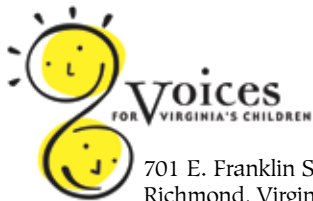
in early care and education in order to facilitate the long-term financial well-being of low income families, support parents in the workforce, and prepare the future workforce to meet the needs of the regional business community.

Collaborative members include PNC Bank, the Cafritz Foundation, The Boeing Company, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, CityBridge Foundation, Freddie Mac Foundation, Meyer Foundation and Rocksprings Foundation.

"These new grants will make a significant difference in the lives of thousands of low-income working women struggling to find quality child care in order to earn a better living for their families," said Phyllis Caldwell, president of Washington Area Women's Foundation. "These grants also will help prepare more young children for kindergarten, and will open doors to better paying careers for child care workers."

The other grantees are D.C. Appleseed, CentroNia, Hopkins House, Empower DC, and Fairfax Futures.

For more information about Voices work in Northern Virginia, contact Kathy May at kmay@vakids.org or 703-277-7748.



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