



For Virginia's
Children



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2015

Dear Voices supporters,

Growing up in poverty is one of the single greatest threats to children, and, unfortunately, child poverty is moving in the wrong direction here in Virginia. We are one of only ten states in which child poverty rates got a little worse in 2013, the most recent year for which we have statistics. While child poverty rates improved or stayed the same in most states, the Commonwealth's rate nudged up from 15% to 16%.

That statewide statistic masks great variation – and that's why we track the child poverty rate (and most other indicators in our Kids Count Data Center) by locality and region. While the Southwest and Southside regions have the highest overall rates (1 in 4 kids live in poverty), the Hampton Roads region has the highest number of kids in poverty (71,416).

At Voices for Virginia's Children, we believe that all good advocacy on behalf of children starts with good data. We are proud to be home to the Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center for Virginia. I invite you to visit our website at www.vakids.org to download our regional infographics – just updated with the latest data – to learn how kids are faring where you live. Armed with this information, we can fight together for policies that will improve the lives of Virginia's kids.

Margaret Nimmo Crowe
Executive Director



SAVE THE DATE

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KIDS COUNT**
AWARD

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2015 • RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

To purchase tickets or learn about sponsorship opportunities, please visit our website at www.vakids.org.



Legislators, advocates, and families joined Gov. McAuliffe on May 26 at the ceremonial bill signing of the new law improving safety in child care.

VOICES AT THE CAPITOL

Improving the safety of child care

Voices for Virginia's Children worked closely with our partners at Child Care Aware of Virginia and families from throughout Virginia to improve the safety of home-based child care in the 2015 General Assembly. While the legislation does not make as many improvements as advocates and families had sought, bipartisan support ensured that Virginia is taking steps in the right direction. The most significant changes are:



home-based day care providers must get a license when they serve 5 or more children, down from the current threshold of 6 or more children, starting July 2016; and



licensed providers will have to undergo fingerprint background checks instead of name-only checks starting in July 2017.

Special thanks to the Allen, Lafkin, and Rossi families who fought to turn their terrible personal tragedies into policy wins for all children. Voices is grateful to a bi-partisan group of legislators who started working on this issue last year and remained dedicated to seeking progress through the legislative session including Dels. Anderson, Filler-Corn, and Peace and Sens. Hanger and Favola.



Voices was pleased to tour Horizon Behavioral Health to see how Horizon is helping children throughout their region improve access to child psychiatry through the funding for which Voices has advocated. From left to right: Del. Scott Garrett, Horizon Behavioral Health CEO Damien Cabezas, Del. Joseph Yost, Voices Executive Director Margaret Nimmo Crowe, Voices Policy Analyst Ashley Everette, Horizon Behavioral Health Chief Clinical Officer Sandy Bryant.

Continuing to improve access to mental health treatment

The Voices-led Campaign for Children's Mental Health once again successfully advocated to increase state funding for community-based crisis response services for children and child psychiatry services. The legislature approved an additional \$2 million in funding, bringing the total state general funds available for these services to \$6.65 million in fiscal year 2016.

Funds are used in all five health planning regions of the Commonwealth for expanded treatment options, including: a new Children's Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center in Portsmouth, telepsychiatry appointments for children in rural areas of Southwest and Central Virginia where there was previously no access, mobile crisis teams in Northern Virginia and parts of Tidewater and the Middle Peninsula/Northern Neck, and short-term crisis stabilization beds in the Richmond area.

Fighting to improve results for youth aging out of foster care

Voices once again led the fight alongside the Virginia Poverty Law Center and FACES of Virginia Families in advocating that Virginia provide housing and other supports to youth who age out of foster care without family connections AND are in school or working. Under the federal Fostering Connections Act, Virginia could be drawing down millions of dollars in federal funds to improve the odds of success for this vulnerable population of youth – more than 500 a year – who are at much higher risk of negative and costly outcomes such as homelessness and unemployment. The state could also use these funds to place older youth in adoptive homes.

Unfortunately, at the very end of the legislative session, legislators negotiating the budget removed the funding and language that would have made this possible. At Voices, we find it unacceptable that Virginia ranks 50th in the country in terms of the rate of youth aging out of foster care at age 18 without family connections, and we will work with legislative champions to ensure this measure is introduced again in the 2016 session.



AROUND THE STATE

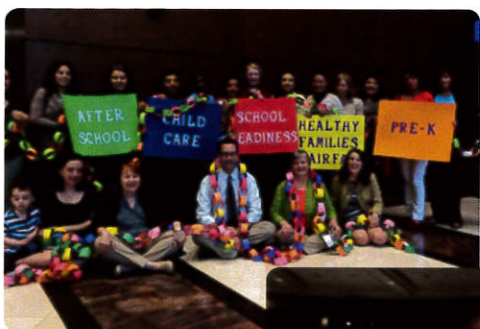
Youth in Newport News donate to Voices

Thank you to the City of Newport News Parks & Recreation Youth Programs for making Voices for Virginia's Children a beneficiary of its "Kicking for a Cause" event. The children participating in the youth programs in Newport News conducted small fundraising events for two months that culminated in a stellar performance of "The Little Mermaid" at City Center at Oyster Point in Newport News. Over 500 people attended the performance. Thanks to the hard work of the participants and families, the kids were able to raise more than \$2,000 for two organizations. Voices for Virginia's Children is honored to have been a recipient. The participation, enthusiasm, and results from the youth this year was incredible. Thank you for making kids count!



Vino for Voices raises awareness and funds

May was a perfect month to gather at a winery, learn about a great organization, and bid on items for an important cause. The annual "Vino for Voices" provided that opportunity. Hosted by Board of Directors Vice Chair Jamie Dyke Clancey, attendees were treated to great music by Aubrey Driggers, outstanding food, and wonderful items to bid on at our silent auction. Just under 40 people attended the event to socialize, network, and learn about our mission. Guests also listened to Sen. Emmett Hanger speak about the importance of having strong child advocates within the state. Thanks to the planning committee, all the volunteers, and Prince Michel for making this event a success; because of their tireless effort, "Vino for Voices" raised \$3,000.



Advocates champion school readiness for Northern Virginia

Voices for Virginia's Children is fortunate to have many friends, leaders and policy makers in Northern Virginia who recognize the importance of investments of school readiness. This year, Voices helped mobilize supporters during the local budget process with exciting results in Fairfax County and Alexandria. We are thankful for the support of the Washington Area Women's Foundation Early Childhood Funders Collaborative and The Meyer Foundation for this work. We are also excited to report that the final Fairfax County budget includes investments in all of our requests, and makes a significant step forward for school readiness for Northern Virginia! Together, we helped the Board of Supervisors connect the critical components of school readiness.



VOICES WELCOMES NEW STAFF

Nikkia Johnson is our new Office Administrator. Her duties include updating and maintaining current donor database systems, managing Voices' development activity, preparing materials for board meetings, and providing support in conducting forums, training sessions and fundraising events. Nikkia graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a B.S. in Sociology.

Nikkia has a long background of interning at several of Richmond's nonprofit organizations, as well as working with youth and teens. Among her numerous hobbies and volunteer services are teaching dance, mentoring at Brown Middle School, and traveling.



For Virginia's
Children

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CANDIDATE FORUM

SENATE DISTRICT 10

With Marleen Durfee | Daniel A. Gecker
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**TUESDAY
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7:00-8:30 PM

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