

# FALL NEWSLETTER 2012

CAROL S. FOX

# MAKING KIDS COUNT AWARD

**Voices to Present the First-Ever Carol S. Fox "Making Kids Count" Award at Gala Reception  
October 23, 2012, 6:00 pm - Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden - Richmond, Virginia**

At Voices, our mission is to champion policies that improve the lives of Virginia's children. This year, we are thrilled to announce that, beginning in 2012, we will also be championing others in the Commonwealth who are dedicated to doing the same. The Voices' Board of Directors has established the Voices' Carol S. Fox "Making Kids Count" Award, which will be given annually to an individual or organization that has set an exemplary standard of selfless and principled effort to better the lives of children in Virginia.

Carol Spaulding Fox was among a number of illustrious Virginians – including two former Virginia First Ladies – who helped to found Voices for Virginia's Children. She was a long-serving board member, inspiring the organization and her peers during her tenure as board chair and in other leadership roles. In honor of her dedicated service, and in tribute to the extraordinary contributions she made to improve the well-being of Virginia's children, Voices' Board of Directors created this award.

Since the beginning of this year, our staff and Board have been engaged in preparations for what will be an exciting milestone for the organization: a gala reception to present this award to its recipient, and also to recognize Carol for the great inspiration she has provided through her generous and tireless efforts. The reception will be held at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, on October 23rd at 6:00 p.m. We are pleased that Rob Dugger will be our special guest speaker for the evening. Rob is an economist and leading business-sector advocate of expanding early childhood initiatives to ensure a highly capable future workforce. He is the co-founder of ReadyNation.org (formerly the Partnership for America's Economic Success), a board member of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation; and Chairman of the Alexandria/Arlington Smart Beginnings Leadership Council. We also have some other surprises in store for our guests that evening, and will be updating our supporters from time to time leading up to the event, so stay tuned!

We are very fortunate to be joined in our efforts by an impressive list of sponsors that is growing each week. Several have signed on while issuing a "challenge" to their associates to match their own level of sponsorship, which is a great idea! So far, the following groups have generously contributed to our event: E2 Events, The Monument Group, Mediapond, B2L Consulting, Hilbridge Group, Whitehead Consulting and phRMA. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.  
(Continue to page 2)

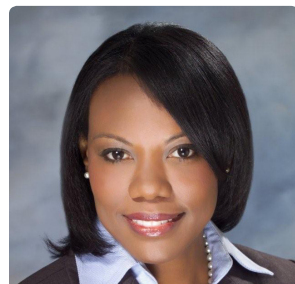


In Virginia, where it seems we always have much work to do to improve our children's opportunities for success and not enough time or resources to accomplish that goal, we believe it's important to pause every so often and celebrate the accomplishments of our hard-working child advocacy community. We have so many talented, dedicated champions of children here in the Commonwealth, and we're pleased to have a new opportunity to recognize their hard work.

We hope that all of our supporters will join us for this great occasion, and we look forward to seeing you on October 23rd!

Remember: sponsorship opportunities are going fast, but still available! Please contact Cathy McCallister at [Cathy@vakids.org](mailto:Cathy@vakids.org) for more information. Ticketing and sponsorship package information can be found at [www.carolfoxevent.vakids.org](http://www.carolfoxevent.vakids.org).

## GREETINGS FROM VOICES' BOARD CHAIR



**Stacy Hawkins Adams**  
Chair, Board of Directors

It was an honor this past June to join an enthusiastic contingent of Voices for Virginia's Children board members, and the staff, at a joint conference hosted in Washington by Voices for America's Children and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network. Our leader, John Morgan, helped co-chair the four day event, which included child advocates from nearly every state.

Among the highlights was witnessing the roar of cheers and chatter on the morning word raced through conference workshops that the U.S. Supreme Court had upheld a mandate requiring Americans to carry health insurance - a ruling that many child advocates believe will improve the wellbeing of millions of youths. Regardless of one's perspective on the health care ruling, watching hundreds of people who care about children consider the decision worthy of nail-biting anticipation was intriguing.

Their reactions were reminders that while the conference was in some ways familiar - featuring discussions about strategy, collaboration and technology - the obvious devotion to improving children's lives was anything but routine. The conference theme, Turning Point for Kids: Our Decisions, America's Future, lent appropriate weight to the sentiments this cadre of child advocates carried with them on visits to Capitol Hill, and undoubtedly in the work they've accomplished since returning to their respective states.

You'll find examples of our commitment to young Virginians and their families throughout this newsletter. As you read, please consider how you can help shape a more positive and vibrant future for the Commonwealth's children. Your voice, and your sphere of influence, matter.

Sincerely,  
Stacy



## VOICES CO-HOSTS 2012 CHILD WELFARE & HOUSING ACCESS SUMMIT

On June 12th, Voices - along with partners, The Virginia Poverty Law Center and FACES for Virginia Families - hosted the 2012 Child Welfare & Housing Access Summit at the Virginia Housing Center in Glen Allen, VA. Nearly 100 participants from all over the Commonwealth and from a variety of interests and backgrounds came together around a critical issue: ensuring that children who age out of foster care are able to transition out of that system and into a safe, stable living situation so they can begin their adult lives with a solid foundation.

The housing summit provided a day of presentations and, most importantly, conversations and collaboration between housing and child welfare experts and advocates, who are all looking for better ways to change the dismal statistics these youth face and to find them affordable housing with appropriate supports. Our summit began with welcoming remarks from Delegate Chris Peace of Hanover (by video) and Senator George Barker of Fairfax. Both are vocal advocates for the needs of Virginia's youth who are being served by the Department of Social Services, and we were fortunate to have their participation; as the theme of the day was "collaboration," the General Assembly must play a critical role in helping to find solutions to the crises these youth face as they leave foster care.

Ruth Ann White, Executive Director of the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare ([www.nchcw.org](http://www.nchcw.org)) provided the opening plenary for our summit, offering a detailed and engaging presentation on NCHCW's efforts throughout the country to address this all-too-common issue. Ruth Ann gave insight into ways other states have leveraged both federal grant programs and private partnerships to make positive strides in producing more and better housing options for youth aging out of care.

The remainder of the day was dedicated to three concurrent working groups, each led by two experts: Accessing State and Federal Funds to Support Housing for Youth Aging Out; Utilizing Child Welfare Resources; and Non-profit Initiatives and Connections to Community Supports. The groups dug in to their topics, and active discussions provided great fodder for reporting back to the larger group during the final session, where a diverse panel - representing Project LIFE, the Virginia Housing Development Authority, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program, the Family Law Clinic at the University of Richmond School of Law and Homeward Virginia - gave responses and recommendations based on the groups' reports.



**Sen. Barbara Favola, in her closing remarks to the Summit, urges stakeholders to find new ways to partner and collaborate to achieve housing goals for youth aging out of foster care.**



**Summit participants Sen. George Barker and Executive Director Michael Wong join our guests in listening to NCHCW Executive Director Ruth White.**

We closed the day with remarks from Virginia Senator Barbara Favola from Arlington, yet another legislative champion for youth in foster care. We were grateful to have her active participation during the Summit, and fortunate to hear her pledge her support to working on this ongoing issue.

Voices, along with our partners, is taking lessons learned from the Summit and will be building an ongoing workgroup around the needs of children aging out of care. Safe, stable and affordable housing, after all, is so much more than four walls and a roof for these youth - it can provide the foundation for the educational, employment and social successes that all youth deserve. For more information about the Child Welfare & Housing Access Summit, including agenda, presentations and information about the related listserv, please visit: [www.vakids.org/our-work/foster-care-adoption/2012-child-welfare-housing-access-summit](http://www.vakids.org/our-work/foster-care-adoption/2012-child-welfare-housing-access-summit).



## VOICES' STAFF, BOARD MEMBERS VISIT CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

Increasingly our work takes us to Washington to educate Virginia's congressional delegation about federal issues impacting the Commonwealth's children. A team of staff and board members recently briefed staff from the offices of Senator Mark Warner and Representatives Robert Hurt

(5th District), Bobby Scott (2nd District) and Jim Moran (8th District.) The congressmen are members of House committees that handle significant child-related bills: Hurt is on Agriculture whose members recently dealt with renewal of the Farm Bill which includes SNAP – the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (i.e. Food Stamps). Congressman Scott is on Education and the Workforce which handles the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("No Child Left Behind") and early childhood bills including Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Moran is on Appropriations which of course considers the funding to support these various programs and services.

We also took the opportunity to brief Senator Warner's staff on a variety of issues including proposed funding cuts which threaten the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), one of the core data sources for Voices KIDS COUNT Data Center.

This was the second year in a row a Voices team visited Congress. It's always a thrill to make the visits and participate in our "democracy in action". Over time we are building up helpful relationships with key staffers, giving us better access to our members of Congress and a stronger chance to influence their position on key bills. In addition to staff, this year's team included board members Stacy Hawkins Adams, Leslie Kaplan, John Purnell, Jamie Dyke Clancey and Huey Battle. Many thanks for their very capable and dedicated participation.



During an afternoon of Hill visits, Board Chair, Stacy Hawkins Adams, and Senior Policy Analyst, Emily Griffey, meet with staff from Rep. Robert Hurt's office.



## NEW NORTHERN VIRGINIA COORDINATOR ON THE JOB

Voices is pleased to announce that Kimberly Gutzler is our new Northern Virginia Coordinator. Since starting her duties on July 17, Kimberly has already distinguished herself by the tremendous energy and commitment she brings to the role of Voices "Ambassador" in Northern Virginia. She is in the process of reaching out to many partners and stakeholders and is eager to learn how she and Voices can support all those concerned about the region's children.

Kimberly comes to us with a degree in Psychology and Family Studies from the University of Arizona. After working in residential settings with troubled youth, she was convinced that children's service programs needed more public and political support. She was thus inspired to begin a new career devoted to helping candidates and causes that believed in putting kids' issues first.

Kimberly lives in Reston and can be reached at [kimberly@vakids.org](mailto:kimberly@vakids.org).

## EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT SEPTEMBER 18TH

Did you know that 3 and 4 year olds can get suspended from preschool? Yes, it's true; there are times when even the best educators are not prepared to handle pre-school behavior. But, before giving up on a young child, or suspending him or her from preschool, educators and parents can work together to address social-emotional and behavioral problems. Virginia has made great strides over the last few years to bring healthy social-emotional development and early childhood mental health into the spotlight. As with all early intervention efforts, any signs of issues early on can help better equip parents to address their children's needs and prepare them for the classroom.

In an effort to build upon the progress of the last few years, policy makers from state agencies, the General Assembly and service providers will come together on Tuesday, September 18th in Richmond for an Early Childhood Mental Health Summit. Experts from Louisiana and Michigan who have built similar systems in their states will present their efforts. This Summit represents an important moment in our attempts to further develop the systems for early childhood in Virginia and connects to our efforts to raise awareness of children's mental health needs through the Campaign for Children's Mental Health. If you are interested in attending or would like more materials about the Summit, please contact Bonnie Grifa with the Partnership for People with Disabilities at 757-410-2738 or [bgrifa@vcu.edu](mailto:bgrifa@vcu.edu). If you cannot attend on the 18th, materials and videos of the sessions will be available on line after the event.



## YOUR ADVOCACY MADE NEW CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING A REALITY

The funding, \$1.5 million for the fiscal year that began July 1, will allow the community services boards in these areas, along with private partners in some cases, to augment the existing crisis services for children. The purpose of the funding is to help maintain children in their own homes and communities and to avoid inpatient hospitalization whenever possible.

Regions I and IV will provide crisis stabilization bed services and mobile crisis services and will hire a child psychiatrist, who will provide direct care to children in the crisis programs, as well as consult with pediatricians and other front-line health providers to increase their knowledge about treating children's mental health conditions. Region III's program will focus on adding children's services crisis clinicians and child psychiatry in underserved parts of this very large region. Child psychiatrists will extend their outreach beyond CSBs through telepsychiatry and consultation to pediatric and primary care practices.

This funding would not have been possible without the strong support of citizens like you. More than 2,000 Virginians signed the Campaign for Children's Mental Health petition to Gov. McDonnell and the legislature to increase access to these services for children. Hundreds of you sent emails to the legislators crafting the budget and many of you visited the General Assembly with us on Advocacy Day.

You also responded when we asked for hand-written thank you notes to these legislators. The Campaign has delivered packets of these thank you notes to key legislators as we have attended legislative meetings and forums this summer. Taking the time to educate our policy makers about the importance of mental health treatment and then thanking them when they respond is what advocacy is all about! Raising your voice for children with serious mental health disorders is making a difference—thank you.

The Campaign for Children's Mental Health delivers hand-written thank you letters from Virginia citizens to the legislators responsible for providing new funding for children's mental health services.



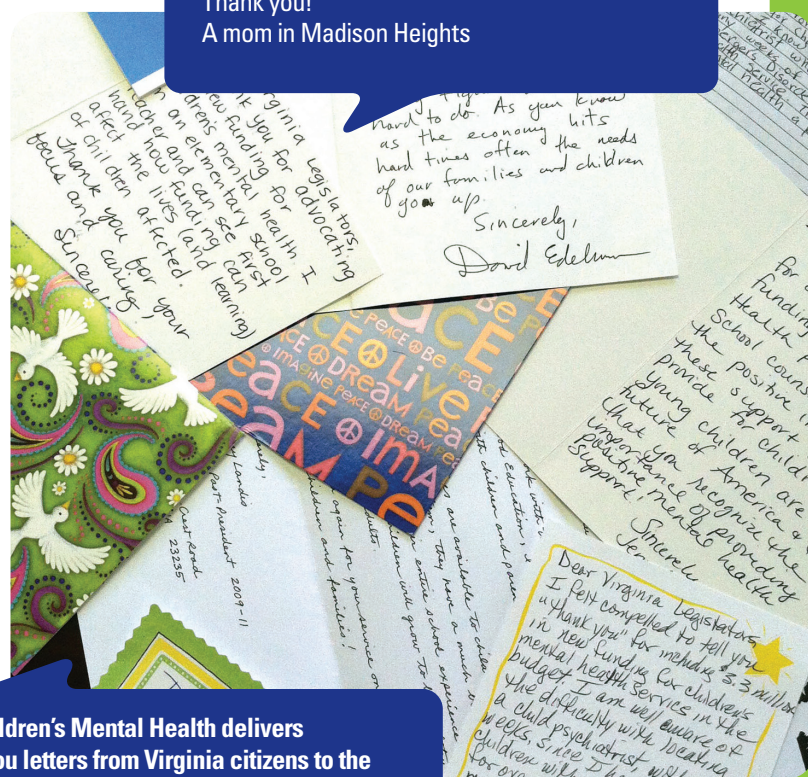
We have exciting news to share about children's mental health! The funding allocated by the General Assembly last session for children's crisis response services and child psychiatry has now been awarded to three regions of community services boards in Virginia. The Greater Richmond area (Region IV), the Lynchburg/Central Virginia area (Region I), and southwest Virginia (portions of the very large and rural Region III) submitted successful applications to the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

### One of the letters written to Virginia legislators on behalf of the Campaign for Children's Mental Health:

Dear Virginia Legislators,

Thank you for including the \$3.3 million in new funding for mental health services. I have four children, three of them are in services at [Central Virginia Community Services Board]. Through the efforts of many people my youngest son has made it through his first year of school without being suspended, he is in 5th grade.

Thank you!  
A mom in Madison Heights



## Voices Urges Candidates to Speak Up for Kids

Throughout the summer and now into the fall, Voices is working on a new electoral advocacy campaign, intent on focusing Virginia candidates for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives on the issues that affect the Commonwealth's children. Through candidate education efforts – such as briefing the campaigns, encouraging debate moderators to address children's issues with candidates and developing candidate questionnaires – we aim to steer the electoral conversation towards a population that often becomes lost in the political shuffle, since they are not yet able to vote: our children.

But we're not just focusing on the candidates themselves. It's just as important to make sure everyone who enters a voting booth is as informed about

the issues that will impact Virginia's children as the people whose names are on the ballot. Voters need to know where candidates stand, and media outlets need to be equipped with good information so they can ask candidates the children's policy questions that voters want answered.

We've set up (and will be adding to) a special page on our [www.vakids.org](http://www.vakids.org) website dedicated to our federal electoral advocacy efforts. There, you will find fact sheets, sample questions for candidates and voter information, including links to how and where to register and information on how to comply with Virginia's new Voter Identification laws. Plus, we'll include more details about our "Step Up for Kids" Rally on September 21st, which will focus on raising awareness of kids' issues for the November elections, as well – you can read more on this event in our feature newsletter story dedicated to the Rally.

We've included here some sample questions that you can ask candidates and their campaigns; more can be found on our [www.vakids.org](http://www.vakids.org) site. These are great for candidate town halls and forums, as well as for sharing through the candidates' social media networks. If you have ideas or questions for us related to the federal elections in Virginia, please share them with us at [info@vakids.org](mailto:info@vakids.org). Voices is pleased to work with both Voices for America's Children and First Focus, national bipartisan organizations committed to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

### Budget

Funding for children's programs represents 8% of the federal budget. Do you think this is an appropriate share to improve America's economic conditions? What would you invest in to ensure that Virginia's children are better prepared to succeed?

### Mental Health

In Virginia, as many as 100,000 children and youth suffer from a serious mental illness, yet only 1 in 5 of those kids gets the treatment they need. Effective treatment options and trained professionals are not available in many parts of the state, and long waiting lists delay services when they are available. Untreated mental health problems in children lead to all kinds of negative and expensive consequences: school failure, dropping out of school, substance use, and involvement in the juvenile justice system. If elected, what will you do to ensure that children with mental health disorders can get the treatment they need so that they can become productive citizens?

### Poverty

More children and families in Virginia now live in poverty than at any point in our history. If elected, what would you do in the short term, 1 to 2 years, to help families facing economic hardship? What would you do in the long term, 5 to 10 years, to reverse the trend of increasing poverty?

### Early Childhood

Over 85% of a child's brain is developed by the age of 5. How would you ensure that our youngest children and families are supported during this time? What role do you see the federal government playing to help young children's optimal development?

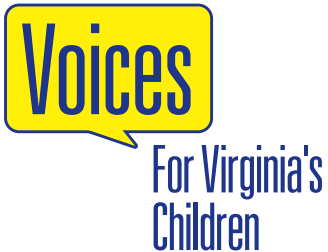
# STEP UP FOR KIDS RALLY SEPTEMBER 21ST

Have you been paying attention to what our candidates for President or Congress have been saying about their stance on issues facing kids and families? Although children's issues may not always be in the media spotlight, our job as advocates for kids is to put them there. Voices will be participating in a variety of activities around the election this year to highlight where candidates stand on kids' issues. One way that all of our followers can be involved is to support our Step Up For Kids Rally.

We invite all supporters of kids - moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, cousins, teachers, and of course, advocates - to join us in Richmond on Friday, September 21st, from 11:00 to noon to show Virginia that we care what candidates say about kids! We are fortunate to be hosted by the Children's Museum of Richmond. We will have fun activities for kids and parents, plus a variety of speakers to get everyone excited about the election and to start thinking about where candidates stand on kids' issues!

Join us on September 21st and tell your friends that you are watching what our candidates say about kids' issues by blogs, email, facebook or twitter.

**Friday, September 21st**  
**11- Noon**  
**Children's Museum of Richmond-Central**  
**2626 W. Broad St. Richmond, VA**



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

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