



To ensure the well-being of **Alabama's children** through research, public awareness, and advocacy.

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

 **VOICES**
FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN

www.alavoices.org



OUR MISSION THROUGH
RESEARCH, PUBLIC AWARENESS
AND ADVOCACY



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Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW, Executive Director,
VOICES for Alabama's Children

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Supporters like you made it possible for VOICES for Alabama's Children to:

- *Educate, mobilize and empower more than 350 new advocates in communities across Alabama.*
- *Launch a new advocacy campaign to fight the growing childhood obesity crisis and help bring healthy food closer to home for 245,000 children in the state.*
- *Fight alongside core partners to secure an additional \$10 million in funding for Alabama's First Class Pre-K Program and to protect Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards.*
- *Reach over two million people through traditional and social media.*
- *Increase our organizational capacity by adding two new team members, Jada Shaffer and Apreill Hartsfield, whose combined skills and knowledge brought more than 20 years of experience in governmental affairs, strategic communications, membership development and grassroots organizing.*
- *Expand the Alabama Kids Count Data Book to include 30 new measures of child well-being and a new domain focusing on school readiness.*
- *Maintain a strong organizational membership base of nearly 70 agencies from across the state working to improve outcomes for children.*
- *Launch our new website and e-advocacy tool! It integrates our communications, membership, and grassroots platforms for increased efficiency.*

First and foremost a warm word of thanks to our donors, organizational members, and fellow child advocates for your tireless efforts to ensure all Alabama children have the opportunity to succeed in life. **VOICES for Alabama's Children shares your vision and fondly acknowledges the partnership and collaboration we share with each of you.**

It's hard to believe that just over one year ago I was being welcomed home to VOICES for Alabama's Children as the new executive director — beyond excited to return to my roots in child advocacy. You see, I'm a firm believer that if we want to change the landscape for our children in a sustainable way, we must influence the policy and decision making process. That premise is the foundation upon which our organization was built back in 1992 and continues to this day.

As I closed my first year, I was left with an overwhelming sense of pride from what was truly a remarkable year for our organization. Preserving the legacy of VOICES for Alabama's Children was top of mind but not second to an intentional focus on lifting the organization to new heights in each area of our mission.

Aside from growing our advocacy, we grew our organizational leadership on our Board of Directors. In 2014 we welcomed, Quentin P. Riggins (Vice President of Governmental Relations, Alabama Power), Nancy Fortner (Retired Educator, Huntsville City Schools), B. Joyce Stallworth, Ed.D. (Associate Provost, Special Projects, The University of Alabama), Nathan A. Ryan (Attorney, Trousdale Ryan, P.C.) and Ken Spear (English, Language Arts and Journalism Teacher, Montgomery Public Schools), – all of whom added tremendous value toward helping accomplish our mission.

Advocacy is the heart and soul of what we do and for more than 20 years you have trusted VOICES for Alabama's Children to be the voice for children in the state through research and advocacy. 2014 was an exceptional year of transformation for our organization and I am humbled by your support. Because of you we were successful in 2014 and are primed to continue that success in the years ahead -- all for one reason-- because powerless children need powerful voices.

Yours in advocacy,

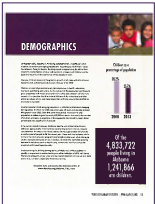
Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW
Executive Director



HOW WE APPROACH OUR RESEARCH

Research, specifically information collected for the *Alabama Kids Count Data Book*, establishes a solid foundation for all of our work. *The Alabama Kids Count Data Book*, in its 21st Edition, has served as both a benchmark and a road map to improving Alabama's child well-being. It is among the most trusted sources for child well-being data in the state.

Alabama Kids Count Data Book

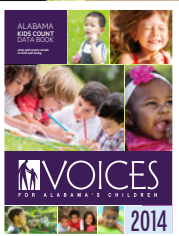


Alabama Kids Count Data Book's new design includes brief narratives and more visual content to help *Data Book* users gain a better understanding of Alabama's current child well-being.

Data from five domains – health, school readiness, education, safety, and economic security – grew from 12 to 46 measures in 2014. Complete state and county data profiles are now online to give a closer look at each of Alabama's 67 counties. Additionally, because

VOICES for Alabama's Children's mantra "what gets measured gets changed", has remained the same since our beginning, but **the 2014 Alabama Kids Count Data Book ushered in a new era of data and how it is presented.** The

latest edition of the *Data Book* presented more visualized data along with brief narratives and simplified data charts to help decision makers, grassroots advocates, organizations and the media understand the data better and truly grasp what the numbers mean for their communities.



VOICES for Alabama's Children's annual *Alabama Kids Count Data Book* is overhauled for a new look and expands data to cover 46 child well-being measures.

of our partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, data users can download customized child well-being information for the national, state and county levels from the KIDS COUNT Data Center.

The redesigned *Data Book* demonstrates more clearly the trends in child well-being. It revealed that the state's children experienced more economic instability over the last decade, but are safer, better prepared to begin school and meeting more educational milestones. Equally important was the shifting child demographics and the implications of the changing face of Alabama.

IMPACT:

- Partnered with Children's of Alabama to provide Alabama legislators and state agency heads with a copy of the *Alabama Kids Count Data Book*.
- Alabama data included in the KIDS COUNT Data Center received over 350,000 page views with 12,379 new visits over the year.
- Conducted and participated in 32 presentations and events in 2014 sharing Alabama Kids Count Data with more than 4,200 people around the state — doubling our reach from 2013.



VOICES WELCOMES A NEW TEAM MEMBER

Apreill Hartsfield, JD, Communications Director,
VOICES for Alabama's Children





HOW WE APPROACH PUBLIC AWARENESS

Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW, Executive Director, discusses VOICES for Alabama's Children's work with Alabama News Network's (WAKA's) Tim Lenox.

Targeted campaigns, partnerships and coalitions have helped VOICES for Alabama's Children successfully influence the conversation around children's issues – especially issues that present the biggest barriers to their success. Nurturing existing relationships and building new ones reinforces support of our key legislative priorities, while seizing traditional and new media opportunities to publicize our message expands Alabama's knowledge of where we stand on key children's issues.

Launched Parent VOICES for Pre-K – a grassroots movement supporting Alabama's First Class Pre-K!

For eight consecutive years, Alabama's First Class Pre-K program has been nationally recognized as the top program in the country in terms of quality. However, only 13 percent of the state's four-year-olds have access. VOICES for Alabama's Children, as part of the Pre-K Task Force, is working to ensure all four-year-olds have access.

In 2014, we added a new voice to the campaign in a very intentional way – the parent voice. Parent VOICES for Pre-K is a grassroots movement activated in October to leverage the influence of parent advocates and demonstrate the demand for high-quality Pre-K

in Alabama. Our vision is that parents will build and strengthen relationships with state lawmakers and advance advocacy for expanding Alabama's First Class Pre-K program.

IMPACT:

- Recruited more than 100 parents, grandparents, educators and other advocates for Parent VOICES for Pre-K.
- Parent VOICES for Pre-K took over 200 actions reaching out to their lawmakers through visits, calls, emails, and volunteer recruitment.



Over 100 advocates joined us at our First Annual Child Advocacy Day. The event provided child advocates a venue to network, hear from elected officials about children's issues and have a voice in improving outcomes for Alabama's children.

"If we want to change the landscape for our children in a sustainable way, we must influence the policy and decision making process."

— Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW



VOICES WELCOMES A NEW TEAM MEMBER

Jada Shaffer, Campaign Manager,
VOICES for Alabama's Children



Healthy Food Access Awareness Campaign

The 2014 Alabama Kids Count Data Book shows that nearly one million Alabamians, including 245,000 children, live in communities with limited or no access to healthy food. Research shows that people who lack access to healthy food are more likely to be overweight or obese and suffer from diet-related illnesses such as Cardiovascular Disease, High Blood Pressure and Type 2 Diabetes.

VOICES for Alabama's Children challenged the status quo for our children who live in communities with limited access to fresh, healthy food. **We partnered with Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Heart Association, to launch the statewide Healthy Food Access Campaign.** The campaign's goals are to bring healthier food options closer to home and to reverse the current health trends among children, including the growing childhood obesity crisis, through policy change.

We traveled across the state dialoguing on the issue of food access, the effects on children and families and provided details about one simple policy solution that we would be proposing – healthy food financing. Healthy food financing initiatives provide loans and other financial resources to encourage healthy food retailers – such as grocery stores and farmers markets – to open in areas of the state where residents have limited access to healthy food. These policies have been championed across the country and have been successful in bringing healthier food closer to home, creating new jobs and boosting local economies.



Rhonda Mann, VOICES for Alabama's Children's Policy and Research Director discusses the need for healthy food access in Alabama with an advocate in Lee County.

IMPACT:

- Coordinated and managed efforts of the Healthy Food Access Campaign coalition, a group of over 110 organizations statewide.
- Recruited over 200 volunteers to help increase visibility and champion food access for children.
- Co-hosted the Grocery Summit with the Joseph S. Bruno Foundation and the Alabama Grocers Association to open a dialogue among 45 business and state agency leaders about the issue of access to healthy food in Alabama.
- Created two 15 second commercials that aired for four months on television stations in Birmingham and Montgomery – two of the state's largest media markets and conducted two social media campaigns.
- Campaign messages touched over two million people through traditional and social media.



Advocates for expanding healthy food access to all Alabamians share why they believe the issue is important.



The only grocery store near VOICES for Alabama's Children's office closed in 2014 placing the office in an area with no access to healthy food. Staff traveled throughout the area for a first-hand look at the impact on a community when it does not have access to healthy food.



HOW WE APPROACH ADVOCACY

Bringing the data to life: VOICES for Alabama's Children reminds us that Alabama's Kids Count is making a difference in Alabama communities

Advocacy is the heart and soul of our work. We promote researched-based policy solutions that move us closer to the kind of Alabama we all want for our children.

With a renewed focus on grassroots advocacy, VOICES for Alabama's Children educated 4,500 advocates on key children's issues and trained and mobilized 355 new advocates. The flood of support from individuals passionate about children and improving child well-being in Alabama sparked 3,100 actions through alerts and messages to lawmakers on bills with the potential to change the lives of children and their families.

We also hosted our inaugural Child Advocacy Day bringing together over 100 advocates to exercise their power at the legislature.

"I'm grateful that so many child advocates have joined together to speak with a unified voice, because powerless children need powerful voices," — Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW,

Executive Director, told advocates during Child Advocacy Day.

IMPACT:

- VOICES for Alabama's Children partnered to successfully advocate for a \$10 million increase in Pre-K funding.
- Partnered with Alabama GRIT to protect Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards from repeal.
- Supported a legislative resolution to affirm Alabama's commitment to provide families the opportunity to buy healthy food no matter where they live.





VOICES for Alabama's Children hosted a "Meet & Greet" in Opelika to allow advocates an opportunity to network and learn more about healthy food access and pre-k funding. Staff, Melanie Bridgeforth and Jada Shaffer, are pictured with 2014-2015 Miss Alabama Outstanding Teen, Jessica Baeder and Alabama Department of Agriculture deputy commissioner, Glenn Zorn.



VOICES for Alabama's Children

Join VOICES CAN!

VOICES for Alabama's Children's website gets a new look in 2014.



VOICES for Alabama's Children Board Member, Dr. Joyce Stallworth, visits with one of her elected officials, Senator Bobby Singleton (D – Tuscaloosa).



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

It's by your continuing support VOICES for Alabama's Children is able to continue our work in advocating for Alabama's children, a mission started in 1992.

CORPORATE & FOUNDATION PARTNERS

- Alabama Power Foundation
- Alabama State Department of Education
(Supporting *Alabama Kids Count Data Book*)
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- The Caring Foundation of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama
- Children's of Alabama
- The Daniel Foundation
- GlaxoSmithKline
- The Hobbs Foundation
- Marguerite Casey Foundation
- Mayer Electric Supply Company
- Mike & Gillian Goodrich Charitable Foundation
- Russell Brands, LLC
- Voices for Healthy Kids (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Heart Association)
- Vulcan Materials Foundation

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

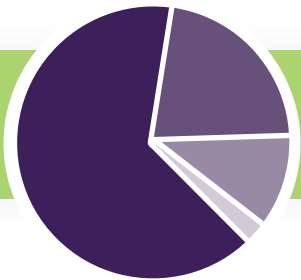
- AARP of Alabama
- Alabama Association of County Directors of Human Resources
- Alabama Association of School Boards
- Alabama Department of Children's Affairs
- Alabama Hospital Association
- Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers
- Alabama Partnership for Children
- Alabama PTA
- AltaPointe Health Systems
- A Plus Education Foundation
- Auburn University – Department of Human Development & Family Studies
- Baldwin County Regional Juvenile Detention Center

- Better Basics
- Camp Fire – Alabama
- Canterbury Academy for Christian Studies
- Child Advocacy Center of East Alabama, Inc.
- Child Protect
- Childcare Resources
- Children's Aid Society
- Christian Services for Children in Alabama, Inc.
- Community Service Programs of West Alabama
- Covington County CPC
- Envision 2020
- Family Services Center of Calhoun County
- First United Methodist Church and Foster Grandparent Program
- Healthy Kids Alabama
- Jasper Area Family Services Center
- Jefferson City Schools
- Jefferson County Council PTA's
- Junior League of Huntsville
- Junior League of Mobile
- Kid One Transport, Inc.
- Madison Premier Schools
- Parents and Children Together (PACT)
- PGA Tour Charities
- Pickens Co. Community Action Committee/Community Dev. Corp.
- Riverbend Center for Mental Health
- South Baldwin Chamber Foundation, Inc
- Southern Poverty Law Center
- Success by 6 of UWWA
- Tuscaloosa Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
- The Literacy Council
- Tuscaloosa City Board of Education
- Tuscaloosa's One Place

INDIVIDUAL PARTNERS

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		Mr. & Mrs. Quentin Riggins	

A LOOK INTO OUR
2014 FINANCIALS



ADVOCACY ■ RESEARCH ■ ADMINISTRATION ■ FUNDRAISING ■

Income

Corporate and Foundations	462,417.00
Individual	12,615.00
Organizational Support	8,118.00
Interest Income	171.00
In-Kind (Non-Cash)	28,172.00
Other Income	10,018.00
Grants Received In 2013 Used In 2014	72,312.00
Totals	593,823.00

Expenses

Advocacy	376,685.20
Research	130,401.00
Administration	67,607.69
Fundraising	7,511.97
Totals	582,205.86

Balance Sheet

ASSETS:	
Cash and Equivalents	113,459.00
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	193.00
Property and Equipment net of Accumulated Depreciation	6,140.00
Total Assets	119,792.00
LIABILITIES:	
Accounts Payable	156.00
Accrued Expenses	3,230.00
Total Liabilities	3,386.00
Net Assets:	
Unrestricted	(3,833.00)
Temporarily Restricted	120,239.00
	116,406.00
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	119,792.00

2014 Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Judge John Edward Rochester – President

40th Judicial Circuit, Retired
Ashland, AL

V. Ellen Jackson – Vice President

Civic Volunteer
Birmingham, AL

Michael Lynch – Treasurer

Project Horseshoe Farm
Greensboro, AL

Gwen Hall – Secretary

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama
Birmingham, AL

Leigh Hancock – Immediate Past President

Civic Volunteer
Birmingham, AL

Jeremy L. Arthur – Member-at-Large

Chamber of Commerce
Association of Alabama
Montgomery, AL

Michon Trent – Member-at-Large

Mobile Area Education Foundation
Mobile, AL

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Penny Dendy

Dendy, O'Malley and Scanland Consulting
Mobile, AL

Nancy Young Fortner

Huntsville City Schools, Retired
Huntsville, AL

Brenda Mitchell Hackney

The Hackney Foundation
Homewood, AL

Penney P. Hartline

Civic Volunteer
Birmingham, AL

Quentin P. Riggins

Alabama Power
Montgomery, AL

Deak Rushton

James Rushton 1 Foundation
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Florence, AL

Ken L. Spear

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Montgomery, AL

Dr. B. Joyce Stallworth

The University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL

Carlton Wood, III

Lewis Communications
Birmingham, AL

Staff

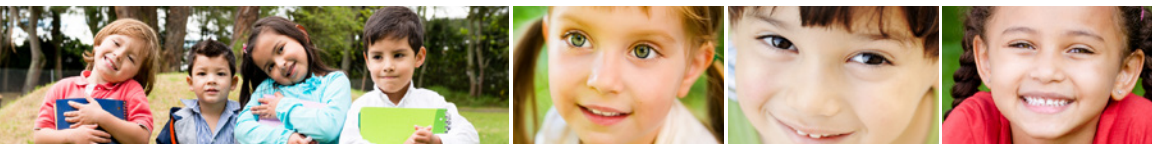
Melanie R. Bridgeforth, MSW, Executive Director

Don Bogie, Ph.D., Senior Kids Count Research Fellow

Apreill Hartsfield, JD, Communications Director

Rhonda Mann, Policy and Research Director

Jada Shaffer, Campaign Manager



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