

 **VOICES**
FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN



ANNUAL
Report **2023**

A Message from the Executive Director

2023 was a year of rebuilding and new growth for VOICES for Alabama's Children. Following the pandemic in 2020 and changes in leadership and staff in the two years following, VOICES persevered, ushering in a new era for the organization.



VOICES' Executive Director, Rhonda Mann, talks with Sen. Greg Albritton, General Fund Budget Committee chair during Child Advocacy Day.

On behalf of VOICES, I thank our dedicated board and advocates committed to improving the lives of Alabama's children. I recognize our efforts could not have been possible without the support of our donors and organizational partners over the last 31 years.



VOICES' Executive Director, Rhonda Mann, talks with Sen. Arthur Orr, Education Trust Fund Budget Committee chair during Child Advocacy Day.

As our state and society emerge from the uncertain and unprecedented times, our organization continues to evolve to meet the changing policy landscape while continually monitoring child well-being data to address issues and trends that will improve the lives and trajectories of our state's youngest and most vulnerable residents. - (continued) -

VOICES launched this new era by increasing capacity. We added two new staff positions. Dawn Owens is the Community Engagement and Birth to Eight Policy Specialist, and Apreill Hartsfield is our Policy/Data Analyst. They have brought additional energy to our policy and advocacy work. Dawn and Apreill are registered lobbyists with plans to lobby and increase our presence at the Statehouse during the 2024 Regular Legislative Session.

The children of today are the hope for our future. It is our responsibility to prioritize their needs and invest in their well-being to create a strong and prosperous workforce in the coming years. Thank you for being a part of this important mission and for your unwavering support. Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of our children and shape a better tomorrow.

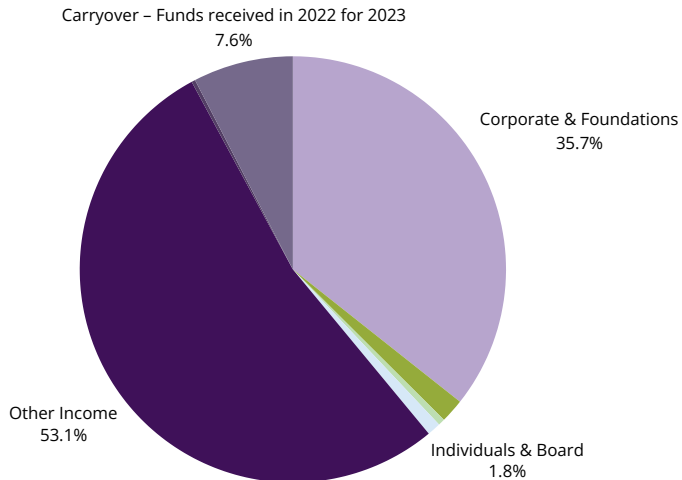
Yours in advocacy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda L. Mann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Rhonda L. Mann,
Executive Director, VOICES for Alabama's Children

2023 Financials

Income



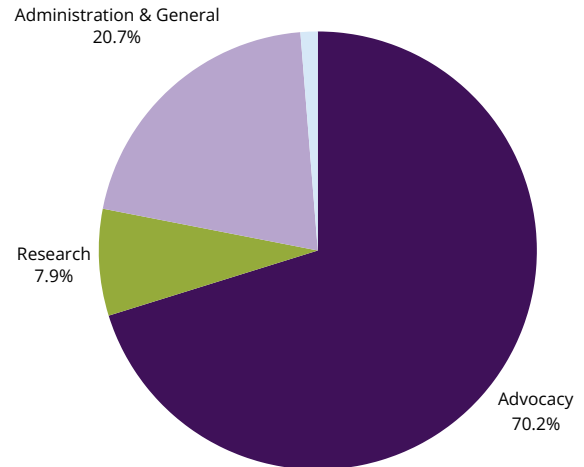
Income

Corporate and Foundations	234,875.00
Individuals & Board	11,902.74
Organizational Memberships	3,325.00
In-Kind (Non-cash)	6,765.00
Other Income	349,946.32
Interest Income	1,867.30
Carryover - Funds received in 2022 for 2023	50,000.00
Total Income	660,704.36

Expenses

Advocacy	393,759.32
Research	44,123.90
Administration & General	115,939.77
Fundraising	--
Donated Services & Indirect	7,130.00
Total Expenses	560,952.99

Expenses



Balance Sheet

ASSETS:	
Cash & Equivalents	241,241.08
Prepaid Expenses & Other Assets	21,544.38
Prop. & Equip. Net of Accumulated Depreciation	6,207.46
Total Assets	268,992.92
LIABILITIES:	
Accounts Payable	3,439.40
Accrued Expenses	6,178.51
Capitalized Lease Obligation	17,900.22
Total Liabilities	27,518.13
Net Assets:	
Unrestricted	181,989.79
Temporarily Restricted	59,485.00
Total Assets	241,474.79
Total Liability & Net Assets	268,992.92

Research

VOICES for Alabama's Children publishes the *Alabama Kids Count Data Book*, which covers approximately 70 indicators of child well-being across four domains: health, education, safety, and economic security. It is the most trusted and comprehensive source of Alabama's child well-being data.



The *Data Book* is a tool for measuring child well-being and identifying areas of need, setting priorities and decision-making at the state and local levels. It helps local and state decision-makers, grassroots advocates, organizations and media outlets to accurately depict the needs and possible solutions for issues affecting Alabama's children.

The *2022 Data Book* highlights the decreasing child population, growing diversity, shortages of medical providers and resources impacting child health outcomes, and improvements in child well-being due to enhancing school readiness programs and investing in family support programs. VOICES makes state and county data profiles available on its website, and historical data from every county in Alabama can be accessed through the National KIDS COUNT ® Data Center.

Our Impact Through Research

- Provided more than 1,200 copies of the *2022 Alabama Kids Count Data Book* to members of the Alabama Legislature, Governor's office, State Finance office, state agency heads, agency administrators, media, organizational members, child advocates, funders, District Superintendents, county DHR offices, First Class Pre-K sites, county Children's Policy Councils and local elected offices.
- In 2023, VOICES conducted and participated in 17 presentations or events reaching 8,355 people.

Public Awareness

Research provides valuable insights into the factors that influence child well-being. However, raising public awareness is crucial to mobilizing support for policies that improve the lives of children and families. VOICES uses traditional and social media to create public awareness about key children's issues, resulting in a groundswell of support for improving child well-being.



VOICES facilitated roundtable discussions about child care at the AALECE Conference in June.



VOICES exhibited at the AALECE Conference in June.

Our Impact Through Public Awareness

- VOICES shared 129 posts to our more than 1,000 Instagram followers. We reached 1,800 shares and the interactions with our content increased by 100%.
- VOICES added 146 new Facebook followers increasing the total to 4,100 in 2023. Our Facebook reach was over 19,000 with 2,100 engagements.
- VOICES' LinkedIn account had 182 page visits, 273 new followers and 1,792 impressions in 2023.
- VOICES and VOICES' issues were mentioned 11 times in the media. These articles focused on the *2022 Alabama Kids Count Data Book*, the *2023 National KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, and issues including child care and chronic absenteeism.

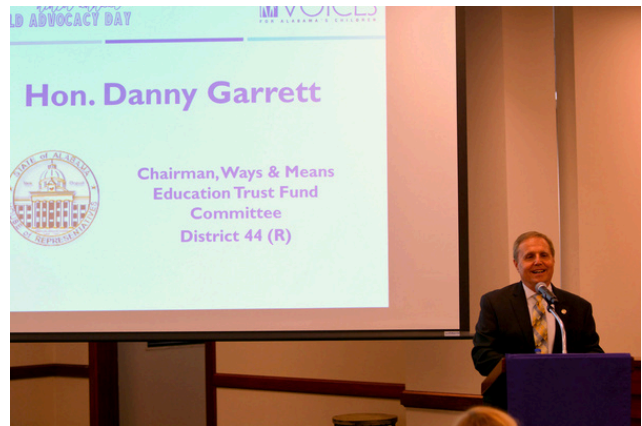
Advocacy

We amplify the VOICES of children and promote policies that enhance their well-being. In 2023, we trained nearly 200 advocates for grassroots advocacy and hosted the 9th Annual Child Advocacy Day with over 100 attendees. Child Advocacy Day was supported by Children's of -(continued)-



VOICES' Board President, Sue McInnish, welcomed child advocates to the 2023 Child Advocacy Day.

Alabama and The Gratitude Foundation. We were joined by the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics during its annual Lobbying Day to urge lawmakers to prioritize children's issues in Alabama. Some of those issues resulted in the following wins.



Rep. Danny Garrett, Ways & Means Education Trust Fund Committee chair discussed the ETF Budget proposed for FY2023 during VOICES' 2023 Child Advocacy Day.

Increased Funding for the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

VOICES supported the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR's) funding request for the state's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), a process for supporting and recognizing child care centers for providing high-quality child care. DHR received \$30 million in Education Trust Fund appropriations to replace federal dollars that will no longer be available to the state in FY2023. This additional funding for QRIS allows DHR to maintain the same level of funding for the program at \$47.8 million for FY2024.

Increased Funding for Alabama's First Class Pre-K Program

VOICES worked to increase funding for the state's nationally recognized First Class Pre-K Program, operated by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE). The governor enacted a \$12 million increase for FY2024 to provide grant funding for an additional 100 classrooms, which could serve up to 1,800 4-year-olds. She also requested that ADECE develop a plan to ensure full access to the voluntary First Class Pre-K program for an estimated 70% of 4-year-olds in Alabama's 19 highest-poverty counties by fall 2024. Since 2012, the Alabama School Ready Alliance business-led Pre-K Task Force has been making recommendations to the governor about expanding access to the program to all families. The Task Force supported Governor Ivey's request for the plan to expand access to the program and has also urged ADECE to create -(continued)-

a plan and timeline for reaching 70% of 4-year-olds statewide by 2026, including addressing obstacles such as transportation, the need for quality providers and teachers, funding for facilities, and after-school care. The funding increase included \$8 million from the Education Trust Fund and \$4 million in supplemental funding.

Increased Funding for Mental Health Services

VOICES raised awareness about the growing need for expanding mental health services for children and youth. In response to this growing need, the Alabama Department of Mental Health received \$211 million from the state's General Fund, an increase of \$18 million over FY2023 funding. The agency received \$77 million from the state's Education Trust Fund, an increase of \$9 million over FY2023 funding. The Alabama State Department of Education received \$4.7 million for School-Based Mental Health Service Coordinators.

Our Impact Through Public Awareness

- More than 100 advocates rallied at the Alabama Legislature for VOICES' 9th Annual Child Advocacy Day.
- VOICES partnered with A+ Education Partnership to train a student-led advocacy group of approximately 25 students in grades 9-12 statewide seeking to improve education for students.
- VOICES provided Master of Social Work interns opportunities to gain valuable experience in research, public policy, advocacy and public administration.
- 50 representatives from VOICES' member organizations attended its advocacy training presented by The Alliance for Justice, Boulder Advocacy Project.

2023 Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Sue McInnish, MPA
President
Community Advocate
Montgomery, AL

Alison Scott, Vice President
Executive Director,
Baptist Health
Foundation Inc.
Birmingham, AL

Lynn Beshear, RN, Secretary
Retired Commissioner,
Alabama Department
of Mental Health
Montgomery, AL

Nicole Schroer, Treasurer
Executive Director,
Madison County Volunteer
Lawyers Program
Huntsville, AL

Jeremy Arthur,
Member at Large
Director, Government and
Economic Development
Institute, Auburn University
Auburn, AL

Charles Ray Nash, E.D.,
Member-at-Large
Senior Vice Chancellor
Emeritus,
University of Alabama System
Tuscaloosa, AL

Marie Hurley Blair,
Immediate Past President
Community Advocate
Birmingham, AL

General Members

Brittney Anderson, MD
Physician/Owner
Anderson Family Care
Tuscaloosa, AL

Terri Averett
Realtor,
Century 21 Regency Realty
Enterprise, AL

Sam Blakemore, PharmD
Pharmacist Manager,
Peds Rx Pharmacy Solutions
Birmingham, AL

Richard Embrey, MD
BlueCross and
BlueShield of Alabama
Birmingham, AL

Tejuania Nelson-Gill
Director of Education,
Lighthouse Academy of
Excellence & Achievement
Bay Minette, AL

Heather Brothers New
Corporate Director of
Communications,
Lyons & Company, Inc.
Gadsden, AL

Freddy Rubio
Rubio Law Firm
Birmingham, AL

Dawn Walton
Chief Financial Officer,
Children's of Alabama
Birmingham, AL

Michon Trent
Executive Director,
Gulf Coast Family Center
Mobile, AL

Staff

Rhonda L. Mann, Executive Director
Apreill Hartsfield, Policy/Data Analyst
Dawn Owens, Birth to Eight Policy Specialist