

Together, Creating a Better Future for Kids



Vision for Children at Risk

2007 Annual Report

From the Board President and Executive Director

Vision for Children at Risk makes a unique and important contribution to the St. Louis region. We bring together the community to create a better future for kids by:

- **Information:** Through the *Children of Metropolitan St. Louis (CMSL)* report and other research, we provide a solid base of comprehensive data and information on children. Soon, this will expand with our new Web-based Children's Information Clearinghouse.
- **Collaboration:** We engage and involve key stakeholders through the St. Louis Metropolitan Children's Agenda, which involves some 300 community agencies in over 25 strategies targeting priority needs of children.
- **New programs and services:** Programs developed through the Children's Agenda serve tens of thousands of children annually and have attracted over \$20 million in new funding to the region. Examples include the Maternal Child Health Coalition, the St. Louis Early Childhood Success initiative, St. Louis Family & Community Partnership and many more.
- **Civic support:** Utilizing the theme "Invest in Kids," we work to increase the level of support for children's issues by business and civic leaders. In addition, St. Louis Children's Summits bring together hundreds of child-serving professionals and community leaders to identify strategies and solutions.

Vision for Children at Risk serves as a catalyst to help improve the way the St. Louis region takes care of its children.

Bob Buck, Board President

Richard Patton, Executive Director

Mission Statement

The mission of Vision for Children at Risk is to promote the well-being of children and youth in the St. Louis metropolitan area, targeting particularly those young people who face serious socio-economic risk. The goal of VCR is to ensure the St. Louis community makes more effective, systematic provision for meeting the fundamental needs of all area children.



Advancing the Well-Being of Children ...



Children's Summit Convenes the Community

More than 300 community leaders, child-serving professionals and child advocates convened around current issues affecting children at the 2007 St. Louis Metropolitan Children's Summit organized by Vision for Children at Risk. The daylong conference focused on finding solutions to the crisis facing public education in the city of St. Louis.



Keynote speaker, education reform activist Dr. Pedro Noguera of New York University, called on the community to build on the strengths it has in place and increase cooperation and collaboration. Other speakers included state and local education and government officials.

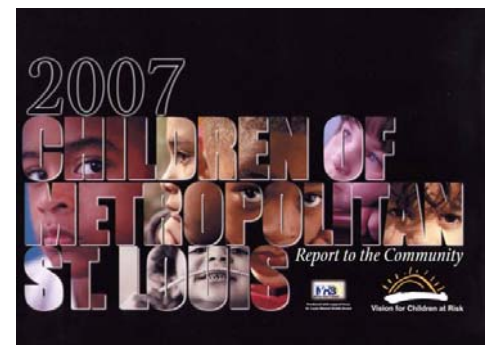
Also during the Summit, participants joined in a review and update on St. Louis Metropolitan Children's Agenda activities targeting other fundamental needs of children such as health, family support, early childhood, youth development and safe neighborhoods.

2007 Report Details Needs of Children

The newest edition of Vision for Children at Risk's biennial report to the community was introduced, providing the latest, most comprehensive data on key indicators of child well-being in the St. Louis region. This is the eighth edition of the *Children of Metropolitan St. Louis* report.

The report finds that nearly 165,000 children – almost 3 in 10 in the region's five core counties – reside in zip codes where the risks to their well-being are severe. Zip codes with the greatest risks are located in the inner-city, economically disadvantaged areas.

VCR also is developing a new Web-based information tool, the St. Louis Children's Information Clearinghouse, that will provide greatly expanded and accessible data and information along with a library of current reports and best practices on children's issues.



Collaborations Make an Impact Through the Children's Agenda

Hundreds of child-serving agencies and community organizations work together under the leadership of Vision for Children at Risk to develop programs and policies improving services to children. The St. Louis Metropolitan Children's Agenda contains over 25 strategies addressing priority needs of children. Highlights of Children's Agenda accomplishments in 2007 include:

- **Public Education.** Vision for Children at Risk provided a forum for civil, constructive dialogue through community forums attended by hundreds. A steering committee comprised of diverse stakeholders met regularly to advance the next steps for community collaboration. Briefing sessions were held for state legislators and a commentary article was published



The St. Louis Family & Community Partnership celebrates April Blue Ribbon Month to prevent child abuse.

- **Preventing Child Abuse and Supporting Foster Families.** Under the guidance of Vision for Children at Risk, the St. Louis Family & Community Partnership has grown to over 60 member organizations. The Partnership's annual April Blue Ribbon Month to Prevent Child Abuse has grown to include observances by over 20 child-care sites plus an area-wide kickoff ceremony. The Partnership also conducts trainings in child abuse prevention practices and promotes recruitment of foster parents.

- **Early Childhood.** VCR facilitates the steering committee for the St. Louis Early Childhood Success Initiative. Goals include streamlining child-care licensing in the city of St. Louis, expanding lead testing and increasing Parents as Teachers Participation. VCR also is leading local implementation of the state of Missouri Early Childhood Comprehensive System plan, and attracted over 75 participants to a forum on advancing school readiness among pre-kindergarten children.

St. Louis Metropolitan Children's Agenda Strategies

Family Support

- Improve quality and impact of parent education programs
- Improve child welfare practice through programs and education to prevent child abuse and neglect
- Minimize impact of parental incarceration on children
- Recruit foster and adoptive parents and increase permanency
- Provide Family Development Credentialing



Quality Education

- Conduct community forums to address critical issues facing the St. Louis Public Schools
- Continue to engage stakeholders to establish a St. Louis Public Education Coalition
- Pursue strategies to improve regional educational quality and equity

Youth Development

- Promote quality nonschool-hour programs and professionally trained youth development workers
- Enhance mentoring programs
- Analyze youth employment/ skill development opportunities and barriers

Safe Neighborhoods & Strong Communities

- Analyze need and identify strategies/ best practices related to Gang Outreach and violence prevention programs

Advocacy and Civic Engagement

- Conduct Invest in Kids public awareness campaign
- Engage civic leaders in addressing children's issues
- Analyze state and regional budgets for children's services (Research)
- Perform community asset assessment (Research)
- Establish Community Children's Services Fund in St. Louis County

Early Childhood

- Improve state & local child care policies and strategies
 - Increase Missouri child care subsidies
 - Promote universal access to voluntary Pre-K programs
 - Support implementation of Quality Rating System
- Implement City of St. Louis Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Success
 - Streamline child care licensing in the City of St. Louis
 - Enforce annual lead testing
 - Increase urban Parents as Teachers participation
- Increase access to services for young children with special needs
- Maintain T.E.A.C.H. Program
- Create early childhood data and information system

Maternal and Child Health

- Increase access to and utilization of health care services
- Improve youth physical activity & nutrition
- Teen pregnancy & STD prevention
- Reduce fetal Infant mortality
- Improve access to behavioral and mental health services



St. Louis Children's Agenda

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Children's Agenda Lead Agencies

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri
Child Day Care Association
Childgarden Child Development Center
Citizens for Missouri's Children
Coalition for Children of Offenders
E. Desmond Lee Technology & Learning Center,
UM-St. Louis
Early Childhood Success Steering Committee
Family Support Council
Family Support Network
Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
Healthy Youth Partnership
Maternal Child Family Health Coalition
Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral
Network
Public Education Coalition Steering Committee
Putting Kids First
Regional Center for Education & Work,
UM-St. Louis
St. Louis Family & Community Partnership
St. Louis for Kids
Teen Pregnancy Prevention Partnership

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Special thanks to the following for their support of Vision for Children at Risk received between January 1 and December 31, 2007:

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U.S. Administration for Children
& Families, Communities
Empowering Youth Program

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