



Working for Kids

Fall 2016 Newsletter

Learn and Get Involved

- **Hear about the work of the St. Louis Crisis Area Intervention Team**, at the [St. Louis Family & Community Partnership](#) meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 16, at 9 a.m. at Vision for Children at Risk. Jeremy Romo from the St. Louis County Police will discuss the Crisis Intervention Team's work to deliver positive law enforcement crisis intervention service to people with mental illness in the St. Louis area. For information, Ruth Ehresman, 314-534-6015, rehresman@visionforchildren.org.
- **An all-day Mental Health First Aid training for faith-based community members will be offered on Monday, Dec. 5**, by [Project LAUNCH](#). [Mental Health First Aid](#) is an eight-hour course that covers how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training develops the skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. For more information, contact Sanaria Sulaiman at 314-534-6015, ssulaiman@visionforchildren.org.
- **The St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council is looking for volunteers to join its five program committees.** [See the November committee meeting schedule](#).
- **Study the issues and candidates and please vote November 8!!!**

Please help build community action for children.
[Donate to Vision for Children at Risk](#)

Amendment 3 Benefits Early Childhood Health and Education

Vision for Children at Risk and the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council both endorse Amendment 3 (Early Childhood Health and Education) that will be on the statewide ballot in Missouri on November 8. The amendment will incrementally increase Missouri's tobacco tax by 60 cents with the revenues generated directed to early childhood health and education, as well as smoking cessation. Despite objections raised to some provisions in the amendment, this remains a unique (and perhaps one-time) opportunity to make a major investment in the future of Missouri's children, yielding all the associated returns in economic progress and quality of life.



- Get detailed information on the ballot measure from the [Raise Your Hand for Kids website](#).
- [Hear Ruth Ehresman of Vision for Children at Risk discuss the amendment on KDHX Radio.](#)
- [Read commentary from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch by VCR Director Richard Patton.](#)
- [Read commentary from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch by Rev. Starsky Wilson, President and CEO of the Deaconess Foundation .](#)

- [See responses from Raise Your Hand for Kids to various questions about the amendment.](#)

Doing Great Things for Children in Foster and Adoptive Care

Children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect need a lot of support. Resource families and agency staff work hard to ensure they have stable, supportive homes. The St. Louis Family & Community Partnership and 270 guests paid tribute to these resource families and agency staff, at the third annual Stepping Up for Kids Awards Luncheon on Oct. 7. Those honored were:

Resource Families

Adella Coleman, Florissant
Shane and Jennifer Tripp, Ferguson
Jan and Paul Wilkin, St. Charles

Agency Staff

Denise Kelley, *Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition*
Gail Knipshild, *Children's Home Society*
Karen Jones, *Missouri Children's Division*



Jefferson County Circuit Judge Darrell Missey gave stirring remarks affirming the efforts of all families and staff in the field "as a force for good" for children. He also referred to his personal campaign to secure more foster homes in Jefferson County. Thanks to Debbie Monterrey of KMOX Radio for again serving as emcee. [See more photos of the luncheon and a summary of Judge Missey's remarks.](#)

Special thanks to our event sponsors Missouri Foundation for Health and the Incarnate Word Foundation, and our 22 table sponsors.

Pictured, front row from left, Judge Darrell Missey, St. Louis Family & Community Partnership co-chair Brenda Maly, resource family honorees Jennifer Tripp and Adella Coleman, and emcee Debbie Monterrey. Second row, Ruth Ehresman from Vision for Children at Risk, resource family honorees Jan and Paul Wilkin, agency staff honorees Gail Knipshild and Karen Jones, and St. Louis Family & Community Partnership co-chair Mike Fitzgerald. Not pictured: honoree Denise Kelley.

Quality Early Childhood Development Programs for More Kids: Program explores elements of an early childhood system

As St. Louis works to expand early childhood opportunities, what can we learn from other cities? What can we draw from national experiences with universal early child care? These topics were explored at the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council's forum on Aug. 23. Katie Rahn, executive director of SouthSide Early Childhood Center, described the [elements of a comprehensive early childhood system, as presented by the BUILD Initiative](#). Key strategies cover leadership, finance, standards, quality improvement, accountability and stakeholder engagement ([learn more](#)). She also discussed Detroit's experience focusing on the highest-need neighborhoods, and the early childhood needs assessment it conducted ([See Detroit's early childhood needs assessment report](#)). The audience also viewed the "When Child Care for All Wasn't Just a Fairytale" segment from [The Raising of America series](#), describing how universal child care was available during World War II and to military families today. [Read a full summary of the forum.](#)



Building an Early Childhood System for St. Louis: *Early Childhood Summit being planned for 2017*

A group of stakeholders representing leading organizations related to early childhood in the St. Louis area is working on plans for an Early Childhood Summit in 2017. The major goal of the summit will be to align and advance early childhood efforts in order to establish an effective, coordinated early childhood strategy for the St. Louis region. Besides the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council, others involved in the planning include Ready by 21 St. Louis, Forward Through Ferguson, For the Sake of All, St. Louis City and County, funders and more. Watch for further announcements on the Summit.

Regional Early Childhood Council Updates Leadership

The St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council has elected five new members to the 26-member Governing Committee: **Carl Filler**, St. Louis Mayor's Office; **Katie Kaufmann**, Ready by 21 St. Louis; **Emily Koenig**, St. Louis County Children's Service Fund; **Nahid Nader-Hashemi**, Webster University; **Katie Rahn**, SouthSide Early Childhood Center; and **Michelle Witthaus**, For the Sake of All at the Brown School of Social Work.



Newly installed committee chairs are **Karen Thomson**, Community Resources & Family Engagement; **Nancy Spargo**, Health and Mental Health; and **Katie Rahn**, Public Awareness & Advocacy. **Anne Kessen Lowell**, community volunteer, and **Dawn Winkler**, United 4 Children, are RECC co-chairs. New volunteers are welcome in the RECC and its committees. [Learn more about the RECC committees and meeting schedules.](#)

VCR's Ruth Ehresman to Serve as *AdvocacyWorks* Trainer

Ruth Ehresman, advocacy coordinator and Family & Community Partnership coordinator at Vision for Children at Risk, has been selected as a peer trainer in the *AdvocacyWorks* initiative. Peer trainers will develop and facilitate seven workshops for Missouri health advocates in 2017. The workshops will cover strategy development, campaign planning and assessment and effective grassroots mobilization, and will be held at various locations around the state. She and the other peer trainers will design the training and provide follow-up consultation with participants. The training is funded by the Missouri Foundation for Health and the REACH Foundation of Kansas City. We are honored that Ruth has been selected for the faculty, a recognition of her many years of experience in advocacy for children. Watch for announcements of the *AdvocacyWorks* sessions.

**Help us create better futures for St. Louis-area children ...
Please Donate**

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