Vision for Children at Risk Looks to the Future

During the coming year, you will see several transitions at Vision for Children at Risk while our organization and commitment to children, youth and their families continue to grow. A major five-year grant from an individual funder reinforces VCR’s commitment and supports organizational capacity to carry out our critical work.

- First, VCR’s founding executive director, Richard Patton, has announced that he is retiring effective Dec. 31, 2017. A search process is nearing completion for a new executive director to succeed him. Rich, who turns 70 in October, looks forward to enjoying retirement with his wife, Corinne, who retired several years ago. Rich has been the driving force in creating, growing and sustaining VCR. He has promoted informed, inclusive collaboration to address the needs of children in poverty and at risk. He has been a passionate, dedicated champion for the well-being of all children. The new executive director will have large shoes to fill.

- Second, after spending our entire 25-plus years at 2433 N. Grand Blvd. on the Sts. Teresa-St. Bridget Church campus, VCR will be moving to the Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being at 1000 N. Vandeventer Ave. by the end of the year. VCR is honored that Deaconess has invited us and Neighborhood Houses to co-locate with them as both of our agencies are longtime Deaconess grantees and share common values and missions. Deaconess expects this will foster greater collaboration between these long time mission partners on behalf of the children in the region. The new building also will offer improved meeting space and efficiencies in sharing of overhead expenses. Most importantly, the new center will give tangible expression to the commitment of the Deaconess Foundation, its partners in the facility and the St. Louis region to promoting child well-being.

Over the past 25-plus years, Vision for Children at Risk has become a major advocate for children in the St. Louis community. We have published nine data reports on children, brought together hundreds of organizations in a variety of collaborative initiatives, and achieved many other accomplishments.

Upcoming Events

Get involved!
All interested parties are invited to attend these events.

Addressing Detrimental Effects of Poverty on Children's Health CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) Training
Thursday, April 20, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Vetta Thompson, Ph.D., of Washington University will lead the training for community members.

Early Childhood Provider Support Network
Meeting for child care center professionals
Friday, April 21, 11:15 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Healthy Kids Family Resource Fair
Families connect with community resources
Saturday, April 29, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. O’Fallon Park Recreation Complex

Children’s Mental Health Day
Thursday, May 4, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. O’Fallon Park Recreation Complex

Give STL Day
Thursday, May 11
Please support Vision for Children at Risk
www.givestlday.org

Legislative Wrap-Up Forum
Review 2017 Missouri Legislature results for children
Thursday, June 15, 9:00 a.m. Central Reform Congregation

All meetings at Vision for Children at Risk unless otherwise noted.

For More Information:
(314) 534-6015
www.visionforchildren.org
Facebook: visionforchildren
Twitter: vcrstl

Early Childhood Summit Being Planned

A broad-based group of partners is planning a St. Louis Metropolitan Early Childhood Summit for fall 2017. The daylong conference will be directed to promoting and implementing a comprehensive, coordinated early childhood development strategy for the St. Louis region. The conference will align and advance early childhood efforts, work to increase investment in early childhood and more. Watch for further announcements.
Advocacy Group Takes Next Step Forward

The Missouri Children’s Leadership Council (MOCLC), the statewide children’s advocacy group, has taken the next step forward in its development with the hiring of its first full-time executive director. Assuming the position as of April 1 is Brian Schmidt, who most recently was principal of Policy Wonk, LLC. Brian also played an active role in last fall’s campaign for Amendment 3, the tobacco tax for early childhood programs. As executive director, he will handle the administrative and development functions of the coalition. Judy Dungan, the MOCLC’s director of policy and advocacy, will continue to work with legislators in the Capitol on behalf of the coalition during the legislative session. Over the past three years, Judy’s leadership of advocacy efforts has yielded many policy and budgetary successes for children.

Partnering on Training, Provider Network

Project LAUNCH is partnering with the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council on several activities as part of its effort to transition continuation of its work. The five-year federal grant funding Project LAUNCH ends in October. The RECC Health & Mental Health Committee is working with LAUNCH to hold bi-monthly trauma trainings for families and community members; the fourth training was held March 28 and was attended by 31 community members and seven social service professionals. The St. Louis Center for Family Development also supports these trainings. In the other joint project, LAUNCH and the RECC Community Resources & Family Engagement Committee are forming an Early Childhood Provider Support Network which will involve professionals from child care centers and home-based providers. The purpose of the network is to help professionals build relationships with their peers across the community and overcome the isolation often experienced by those in this field.

Vision for Children at Risk, one of the founding partners of MOCLC, has provided administrative support over the past three years as VCR’s Ruth Ehersman facilitated the strategic planning process, submitted grant requests to obtain the necessary funding for hiring the executive director, and more. VCR will continue a strong relationship with the MOCLC as Ruth serves on the group’s steering committee. VCR is pleased that the MOCLC is able to take this important next step.

Building Community Capacity in Strengthening Families

Also as part of its sustainability efforts, Project LAUNCH is working to build community capacity in the Strengthening Families program. On March 13-14, a Parent Café train-the-trainer session was held for eight professionals. These individuals in turn will train others in the community. If your organization is interested in being trained in the Parent Café model can contact Project LAUNCH at 314-534-6015.

In addition, 34 community members and service providers were trained in the Chicago Parent Program earlier this year; to continue this work, Project LAUNCH is contracting with the LUME Institute and Temple Church of Christ. The Chicago Parent Program is a 12-session evidence-based parenting program created for parents of young children (2-8 years old) and designed to meet the needs of a culturally and economically diverse audience.

Child Abuse Prevention Groups Merging

The St. Louis Family & Community Partnership (SLFCP) and the St. Louis Area Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (COCAN) are in advanced discussions about joining forces as one organization. Both groups work in the area of child abuse prevention and improving child welfare practice. They partner on many activities such as April Child Abuse Prevention Month. SLFCP offers educational programs of broad interest and holds the annual Stepping Up for Kids Awards in October. COCAN focuses on training for professionals in child welfare. The activities of both organizations would continue in the new organization. The merger is expected to be finalized by summer.
Grant Supports Expanded Staffing for Early Childhood Council

The St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council (RECC) is looking forward to intensifying its impact in the coming year with the help of a $75,000 grant to Vision for Children at Risk from the YouthBridge Community Foundation. The one-year grant will fund a full-time staff position to coordinate the work of the RECC. Until now, resources allowed only a part-time position supporting the RECC. The group involves more than 500 individuals from over 200 agencies in building a coordinated early childhood system for the region. The RECC vision is that all young children in the St. Louis region are healthy, able to learn and develop essential skills so they succeed in life and so our community prospers. For 2017-18, the RECC has adopted early literacy as an area of emphasis. In addition, five RECC committees continue to work on early care and education quality, children’s health and mental health, family engagement, public awareness/advocacy, and development of early childhood data. VCR and the RECC are very thankful to YouthBridge for this investment.

Testifying in Jefferson City for Pre-K Legislation

Representatives of the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council recently testified before Missouri House and Senate committees considering legislation promoting partnership between local school districts and community-based child care providers when the districts need additional Pre-K space. Testifying were Katie Rahn, executive director of SouthSide Early Childhood Center, and Keri Young, Youth In Need vice president, Head Start West. Rahn also chairs the RECC Public Awareness & Advocacy Committee. The testimony was presented in conjunction with the statewide advocacy group, the Missouri Children’s Leadership Council. Both the Senate and House bills (SB 378 and HB 457) have been passed in their respective committees. Learn more about the legislation and view copies of their testimony at www.stlearlychildhood.org. Check the Missouri Children’s Leadership Council weekly reports (www.moclcl.org) and the Missouri House and Senate websites for updates on the status of this legislation.

Missouri Medicaid Faces Potential Changes

A full house gathered at Vision for Children at Risk in January to hear a presentation on possible changes to Missouri’s Medicaid program by Amy Blouin, executive director of the Missouri Budget Project. She described how funding could be changed to block grants or a per-capita formula, resulting possibly in less funding. For a full summary of her remarks, visit www.visionforchildren.org in the News/Blog section.
April Is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Join the St Louis Family & Community Partnership, the St. Louis Area Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and other partners in promoting strong families and safe children during the annual April Child Abuse Prevention Month. Here’s how you can get involved:

• Post an "Every Child, Every Family. Secure and Safe." yard sign at your agency, your church or your home. See photos at right of 2017 partners with their signs.
• Visit the Vision for Children at Risk Facebook page daily in April to see pictures of organizations participating in Child Abuse Prevention Month.
• Join in the Healthy Kids Family Resource Fair on Saturday, April 29, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the O'Fallon Park Recreation Complex YMCA, 4343 West Florissant Ave. There will be displays from community agencies and entertainment for the children.

To order yard signs, pins, stickers or bookmarks, or to request a table for your agency at the April 29 Healthy Kids Family Resource Fair, contact Ruth Ehresman, 314-534-6015, rehresman@visionforchildren.org. For more information: www.stlfamilycommunity.org.

Each year, more than 15,000 incidents of alleged child abuse and neglect are reported in the Missouri counties of the metropolitan St. Louis area. Child abuse and neglect have lifelong consequences on the mental and physical health of the child. The St. Louis Family & Community Partnership is staffed and facilitated by Vision for Children at Risk.