



# Vision in Action

Creating a better future for children through research, collaboration and advocacy

Summer 2015

## Upcoming Events

### Get involved!

All interested parties are invited to attend these events.

### Mayor's Commission on Children and Families

Wed., Sept. 9, 8:30 am

St. Louis Community College at Forest Park

### Project LAUNCH Local Council

Thursday, Sept. 17,  
12:00 p.m.

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

For More Information:  
(314) 534-6015

### For the latest news:

[www.visionforchildren.org](http://www.visionforchildren.org)

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## Stepping Up for Kids Luncheon Oct. 9 Celebrates Those Who Serve Children in Foster/Adoptive Care

The St. Louis Family & Community Partnership and Vision for Children at Risk invite the community to attend the second annual **Stepping Up for Kids Awards Luncheon** on Friday, Oct. 9, recognizing the outstanding people who do great things for children in foster and adoptive care.

**Stepping Up for Kids** awards will be presented to a group of exceptional resource families and front-line staff workers. Registration and networking open at 11:15 a.m. followed by lunch at 11:45 a.m. Norwood Hills Country Club, located on Lucas and Hunt Road one mile north of Interstate 70.

We are pleased to have as our guest speaker **Tim Decker**, director of the Missouri Children's Division, and as our emcee, **Debbie Monterrey**, morning host on KMOX-AM. Luncheon registration is \$35 per person, with table sponsorships for 10 guests available at the \$500 Leadership and \$1,000 Blue Ribbon levels. Event sponsorships also are available providing two luncheon registrations. **For registration information and sponsorship information, visit [www.stlfamilycommunity.org](http://www.stlfamilycommunity.org).**

The location at Norwood Hills provides an excellent venue for the luncheon while stating our commitment to North County and the Ferguson area. The 2014 **Stepping Up for Kids** luncheon was attended by over 200 people and was very well received. For more information, contact Ruth Ehresman at [rehresman@visionforchildren.org](mailto:rehresman@visionforchildren.org), or 314-534-6015.



## Ready by 21 Early Childhood Action Team Begins Work

The regional Ready by 21 collective impact initiative is utilizing the **St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council** as the foundation for its **Early Childhood Action Team** as part of developing an overall cradle-to-career child well-being strategy for the St. Louis region. Three meetings have been held so far. Priorities identified include quality of and access to early childhood programs; health, mental health and resiliency; cultural competency, humility

and valuing of diversity; and policies and funding of early childhood programs. Most recently, the Action

Team reviewed the initial recommendations of the Ferguson Commission related to early childhood and how they can be aligned with the Action Team's goals and strategies. The next meeting of the Early Childhood Action Team is Tuesday, Sept. 8, from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. at Vision for Children at Risk, 2401 N. Grand Blvd. For information on the Action Team and how to get involved, contact Liz Hoester at [ehoester@visionforchildren.org](mailto:ehoester@visionforchildren.org), 314-534-6015.



Small-group discussions at the Aug. 11 Early Childhood Action Team meeting.



## In Brief ...

► Empower Missouri and Vision for Children at Risk released a report citing the benefits of raising the minimum wage to create economic opportunity for families and children. The report, **Pathways Out of Poverty: Higher Wages and Targeted Benefits Create Needed Opportunities**, examines how workers gain through raising the minimum wage, and how public benefit programs might be affected. Results show that the great majority of individuals and families benefit from raising the minimum wage. Most public benefits are structured with sliding scales that reward work, however Missouri's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and subsidized child care needs modernization. The report is available at [www.visionforchildren.org](http://www.visionforchildren.org).

► VCR hosted five meetings of the **Ferguson Commission Child Well-Being & Educational Equity Workgroup** June 11-19. Topics covered included college access and affordability, basic needs, early childhood development and education, child mental health, and school structures and financing. VCR Director Rich Patton presented recommendations from the **St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council** to the group including expanding the state child-care subsidy for low-income families and more.

## Reducing Minority Youth Crime Starts With Meeting Young Children's Needs



Attendees at the July 8 St. Louis Family & Community Partnership annual meeting heard a presentation by **Norm White, Ph.D.**, of Saint Louis University on his new project, **Closing the School to Prison Pipeline: Shut It Down!** During the new school year, he will work with racial equity expert **Khatib Waheed** to provide training for administrators and teachers in seven St. Louis Public Schools elementary schools. Participants will consider how a racial identity develops, and efforts will be made to identify and address implicit racial biases that may exist in schools and classrooms. The goal of the program

is to address children's experiences early in life that contribute to a trajectory toward engaging in violent activity or showing severe behavior problems. The program also will seek to engage community resources to help keep children on a positive trajectory. Dr. White is head of the criminal justice program at the College for Public Health and Social Justice at Saint Louis University. View slides from Dr. White's presentation at [www.visionforchildren.org](http://www.visionforchildren.org).

## Motivational Interview Training for Home Visitation Professionals



*Lead trainer Ryan Lindsay from the St. Louis Center for Family Development describes motivational interviewing.*

Fifty home visitation professionals increased their skills in motivational interviewing during a four-part training program sponsored by Project LAUNCH. Motivational interviewing helps in-home service providers improve their communication with clients. Motivational interviewing is based on four foundational values: 1) quality, excellence; 2) openness, innovative, flexible; 3) generosity, acknowledgement, collaboration; and 4) respect, listening, valuing diversity. Other current Project LAUNCH activities include:



- This fall, a Community Café program will begin in the 63106-63107 focus area of Project LAUNCH. Community Cafés work to build leadership and create stronger partnerships among parents and communities around the critical protective factors a child needs to thrive.
- Screenings of children ages 0-5 are now being conducted monthly at the St. Louis Public Library Divoll branch, 4234 N. Grand Blvd. The ASQ:SE and ASQ-3 tools will be used to screen children's social and emotional competence, the most important predictor of school success. The goal is to screen 200 children.

Project LAUNCH is a federally funded program to improve health and mental health outcomes of young children in the 63106 and 63107 ZIP codes. Vision for Children at Risk carries out program operations under contract to the Missouri Departments of Mental Health and Health and Senior Services. For more information, contact Sanaria Sulaiman at [ssulaiman@visionforchildren.org](mailto:ssulaiman@visionforchildren.org), 314-534-6015.

## In Brief ... continued

► VCR expresses its sadness on the untimely loss in recent months of two great funding leaders for children: **Jerry Paul**, former longtime president and CEO of the Deaconess Foundation; and **Don Cuvo**, former longtime executive director of the Saint Louis Mental Health Board. Both were strong advocates for children and were very supportive of the work of VCR.

► Congratulations to **Robbyn Wahby** on her new position as executive director of the Missouri Charter Public School Commission. She worked closely with VCR for over a decade on many projects in early childhood and other areas as liaison from St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay's office.

## Leave a Legacy

Help ensure that VCR's research, collaboration and advocacy will be there for children in the future.

Consider including VCR in your estate plan. For information, call Financial Development at 314-534-6015.



2433 N. Grand Blvd.  
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## New Council Members Elected

Eight new members were elected to the St. Louis Family & Community Partnership Council for the 2015-16 year:

**Michael Brennan** of Every Child's Hope; **Melinda Coburn** of the City of St. Louis Department of Human Services, **Rachel Cramsey** of Let's Start, **Annette House** of the Missouri Children's Division, **Michael McLaughlin** of Washington University, **Jeremy Romo** of the St. Louis County Crisis Intervention Team, **Nickie Steinhoff** of the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, and **Susan Walsh** of Epworth Children and Family Services. Serving as co-chairs in 2015-2016 will be **Michael Fitzgerald** of Our Little Haven and the Incarnate Word Foundation and **Brenda Maly** of the Children's Permanency Partnership. **Pam Mitchell** continues as treasurer.



## The 2015 Missouri Legislature and Children Panel Discussion



From left, **Amy Blouin**, **Judy Dungan** and **Emily van Schenkof**.

The 2015 Missouri Legislature's actions related to children were reviewed at a June legislative forum. Speakers were **Amy Blouin** of the Missouri Budget Project, **Judy Dungan** of the Missouri Children's Leadership Council and **Emily van Schenkof** of Missouri KidsFirst. More than 100 interested stakeholders attended the June 3 legislative forum that examined how children and their families fared in the 2015 legislative session.

### Budget Highlights:

- \$5 million increase in early childhood special education funding to \$149,660,376.
- \$2.45 million increase in Parents as Teachers to \$17,462,250.
- \$3 million cut to \$12.6 million for Missouri Preschool Program.
- 3% rate increase for childcare providers.
- Failed to include \$2 million for inspection of child-care facilities as required by federal Child Development Block Grant program.
- Tax cuts enacted last year will result in a growing shortfall of funds in meeting the basic needs of the state and its people.

### Legislation Passed:

- Requires Dept. of Social Services to use a family assessment approach (bringing in mental health services) in cases where child sexual abuse is reported against a perpetrator under the age of 14.
- Parents may request notice of whether an immunization exemption has been filed for another child in their school, day care or preschool.
- All licensed child care facilities caring for children under 1 year of age shall implement and maintain a safe sleep policy in accordance with American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations.
- State Office of Child Advocate granted authority to conduct independent review of any entity that has had three or more review requests within a calendar year.
- E-cig liquid nicotine containers must be child-resistant.
- Welfare reform bill shortens lifetime benefit limit from 60 months to 45. This will remove benefits for 6,400 children on Jan. 1, 2016. In lieu of long-term monthly cash assistance, there will be lump-sum cash grants for short-term needs.



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## Vision in Action Newsletter



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### Family Fair Promotes Child Abuse Prevention

A coalition of community organizations joined to hold a Family Resource & Fun Fair on April 18, 2015, in



observance of April Child Abuse Prevention Month. More than 90 families attended this first-ever event. They received information on a variety of resources and services available to promote healthy and strong families from the 33 agencies staffing information tables. Children enjoyed entertainment ranging from face painting and dog petting, to doing hula hoops, building a small toolbox and seeing a fire engine up close.

### Parents Learn About Resources at Children's Mental Health Week Fair



Families learned about community services for children and the effects of trauma on child mental health at Children's Mental Health Day, May 9, 2015, at the YMCA O'Fallon Park Recreation Complex. Several dozen agencies provided information on their services. Speakers at a lunch-and-learn discussed the effect of community trauma on children, and aspects of child mental health in the African-American community. Children enjoyed face painting, story reading, a bounce house and

more. The event was organized by Project LAUNCH, Alive & Well STL, BJC Behavioral Health, CenterPointe Hospital, Maternal Child & Family Health Coalition, Perinatal Resource Network, St. Louis Area Council on Child Abuse & Neglect, the YMCA O'Fallon Park Recreation Complex and Vision for Children at Risk.