



Working for Kids

Creating a better future for children by informing, building collaboration and advocating

Summer 2018

Learn and Get Involved

• **"Healing the Effects of Substance Abuse Disorders on Children and Families: The Family Centered Approach"** will be the topic of the Friday, September 21 St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network training program at the Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being, 1000 N. Vandeventer. Speakers will be from the Queen of Peace Center. Information: <https://visionforchildren.org/stlcann/training-workshops/>

Stepping UP For Kids Awards Luncheon

• Help recognize the heroic work of resource families and front-line agency staff for children previously abused or neglected at the fifth annual **Stepping Up for Kids Awards Luncheon**, Friday, October 12 at Norwood Hills Country Club. Information: <https://visionforchildren.org/stlcann/stepping-up-for-kids/>



PLAN group members with VCR Executive Director Sanaria Sulaiman, center left.

PLAN Parent Groups Develop Community Service Projects

Four groups of north St. Louis parents have organized community service projects this summer under the guidance of Project LAUNCH. Through PLAN (Project LAUNCH Action in Neighborhoods), the groups prepared proposals for Project LAUNCH mini-grants to support their projects. PLAN required rigorous proposals containing typical elements such as needs statement, objectives, planned activities and timeline. The four PLAN projects are:

- **Village of Moms** - Outreach projects are being conducted to promote early literacy. A Reading Village has been created under which teens mentor young children in reading. The group participated in a June 30 Parent Engagement Fair.
- **Operation Community Clean-up** - This effort focuses on removing trash, debris and glass from areas adjacent to elementary schools. The goal is to create a safer and more appealing environment for children walking to or from school.
- **Senior and Youth Soul Food Program** - The group is hosting community picnics twice a month on Saturdays between June and August at the Hyde Park Community Center and Park. The goal is to promote a greater sense of community. Alderman Brandon Bosley is supporting the effort.
- **Community Garden** - A garden for raising fresh, healthy vegetables will be built this fall in preparation for spring planting.

"We are very proud of the enthusiasm of our community members and what they are accomplishing," said VCR Executive Director Sanaria Sulaiman.

System of Care Family Leadership Cabinet Serves Parents, Youth

The St. Louis System of Care Family Leadership Cabinet provides a forum for families and youth who have experienced the behavioral health system and now want to work to make it better. The Family Leadership Cabinet is composed of youth ages 15-25 and primary caretakers of children and youth ages 0-25 who have needed or have received mental health services or substance abuse services. The group meets monthly; the next meeting is set for Tuesday, September 25 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the Mathews-Dickey Boys and Girls Club. Vision for Children at Risk is a subcontractor to the Saint Louis Mental Health Board for the System of Care Family Leadership Cabinet. To learn more, contact Ernest Gauss, egauss@visionforchildren.org.



Please Support Vision for Children at Risk

VCR relies on the support of generous donors in the community to help us sustain our work. Here are ways you can help:

- Make a donation. Use the envelope included with this newsletter, or visit www.visionforchildren.org/donate
- Donate your used vehicle to VCR. We will take care of pickup! Just call us, 314-534-6015.
- Shopping on Amazon.com? Support VCR with your purchases on Amazon Smile. Choose VCR on Amazon Smile, or follow the VCR website and Facebook links.



Your gifts to VCR are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. To learn more, contact VCR Financial Development, 314-534-6015.

Vision for Children at Risk brings together people and organizations across the St. Louis region to create a better future for the area's children, especially the most disadvantaged socioeconomically.



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Community Cafés Explore Parent Concerns on Safety and Education

Community Café series on safety and education are under way to engage parents and other community members in developing solutions to pressing needs facing children and families in the 63106 and 63107 ZIP codes and surrounding neighborhoods. In the Safety Cafés, they are being joined by lieutenants and captains from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

Participants have identified two priority topics: Violence, and Relationship with Law Enforcement. The next Safety Café is Thursday, September 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being. At the first meeting of the



Discussion at the April 2018 Safety Café.

Education Café, residents identified three priorities: Basic Needs First, Education Support at Home, and Quality Early Childhood Education. Community Cafés provide a structured process of table conversations for participants to identify community concerns and develop solutions. As a result of the 2016-2017 Cafés on Transportation, Metro has implemented several changes to serve residents better.

Screening Pilot Program Being Developed

Children who enter school with developmental or social-emotional delays quickly fall behind their peers in academic performance. Delays more often go undetected among children in high-need communities. Screening of preschool children can help identify delays and help connect children with needed treatment resources. To address this need, a group of 11 St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council partner agencies is



The DRIVE Initiative from Boston trained RECC agencies on the young child screening program in May.

developing a pilot young child screening and assessment program that will target low-income, high-need communities. The goal is to eventually expand a standardized screening to a wide community level. The program will use the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), a nationally leading screening tool. The pilot group of agencies held a daylong training in May with the DRIVE initiative from Boston which is operating a similar screening initiative. Also providing training was Brookes Publishing, producer of the ASQ. Currently, the group is working with the RECC Health & Mental Health Committee to identify target ZIP codes for the screening pilot and prepare for rollout.

November Ballot Issues of Interest to Children and Families

Vision for Children at Risk calls your attention to two items on the November 6 Missouri ballot that are of interest to children and families. VCR has endorsed both of these proposals.



- **Proposition B raises the minimum wage** very gradually until it reaches \$12/hour in 2023. The stress of low-wage workers who struggle to meet the basic needs of families is a source of toxic stress, with life-long consequences for parents and children. Much of our time and energy focuses on mediating the negative effects that poverty has on children. Raising the minimum wage is a significant way that we can strike at the root of poverty.
- **Amendment 1 enacts campaign finance reform**, limits lobbyist gifts, creates greater openness of public records, and sets up a method to draw electoral districts to minimize gerrymandering and to promote partisan fairness and competitiveness in elections. Wealthy individuals and corporations have a disproportionate amount of power in Missouri elections, and also employ lobbyists who contribute more than \$870,000 annually to elected officials.

Go to www.visionforchildren.org to see fact sheets on both of these proposals.

2018 Missouri Legislature Highlights

Over 80 interested individuals attended the May 24 Legislative Wrap-Up summarizing the 2018 Missouri Legislature's actions affecting children and families. Speakers were **Brian Colby** from the Missouri Budget Project, **Jessica Seitz** from Missouri KidsFirst and **Brian Schmidt** and **Linda Rallo** from Kids Win Missouri. Following are highlights from the 2018 legislature; for details see the blog post at www.visionforchildren.org.

- The age of juvenile court jurisdiction was raised to age 18, keeping 17-year-olds out of the adult court system and enabling them to benefit from services offered through the Missouri Division of Youth Services.
- New mothers are now eligible for Medicaid for 12 months (current eligibility is 60 days) if enrolled in a substance abuse treatment program.
- Requirements for more thorough background screening of childcare providers was enacted, needed to keep Missouri in compliance with federal Child Care Development Block Grant requirements.
- The timeframe was extended for setting up a voluntary Quality Assurance Report that would give parents information they need to choose quality childcare settings. Funding for the pilot QAR was included in the budget sent to the governor.
- Several bills strengthened Missouri's efforts to protect children from human trafficking. One created a public awareness campaign, and a second bill raised the minimum age for marriage in Missouri to 15.



(L to R) Jessica Seitz, Brian Colby, Linda Rallo, Brian Schmidt

Various child welfare provisions were enacted including updated background check requirements for foster parents and free birth certificates to children in foster care.

A major defensive win was defeat of a proposal to expand permissible locations (such as childcare centers) at which concealed firearms can be carried. Efforts to impose work requirements on individuals who receive SNAP benefits were defeated.

Generate Health, the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council, the St. Louis Child Abuse and Neglect Network and Vision for Children at Risk co-sponsored the Legislative Wrap-Up.



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www.visionforchildren.org

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Honoring Outstanding Service to Children

Hear the heartwarming stories of resource families and agency staff who work to provide stable, supportive homes to children in foster and adoptive care, and join in recognizing them for their heroic

Stepping UP For Kids Awards Luncheon

service. Please join Vision for Children at Risk and the St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network for the fifth annual **Stepping Up for Kids Awards Luncheon** on Friday, October 12 at Norwood Hills Country Club. Guest speaker at the luncheon will be the **Hon. Judge Robin Ransom** of the 22nd Circuit Court in St. Louis. Returning as emcee is **Cynthia Williams, MSW**, of the Brown School at Washington University. Learn more and register to attend at <https://visionforchildren.org/stlcann/stepping-up-for-kids/>

Healthy Family Festival

The May 12 Healthy Family Festival at the Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being drew lots of smiles among the 150 parents and children attending. They enjoyed a variety of entertainment and learned about community services from 36 organizations. Jointly planned by VCR and community partners, the event was part of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

