

# 2012 ANNUAL REPORT



**Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition**

*Mobilizing for Children*



**Research.**

**Advocate.**

**Educate.**

**Mobilize.**



*"The challenges facing the school district can and should be an opportunity to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education, are able to reach their full potential, and can be competitive in the global economy. The status quo is no longer acceptable. Our children must come first."*

*- BCAC's Bridgeport Children's Bill of Rights for Education*

**Our Mission: Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC) is a coalition of organizations, parents, and other concerned individuals committed to improving the well-being of Bridgeport's children through research, advocacy, community education, and mobilization.**

In 2012, BCAC continued to honor our commitment to improving the lives of Bridgeport's children. Our city's children face an uncertain future as they contend with hunger, poor health, struggles in school, and potential homelessness. Yet, today we are at a crossroads. Never before have we been as close to securing affordable health care coverage for families. Bridgeport's schools have always been on the radar screen but never before have they received the level of attention and resources that they have in this past year. We are on the cusp of real systemic change that will improve the lives of thousands of children.

Thank you to all of our partners and supporters for helping BCAC shine a light on the challenges facing our children today. Together, we will continue to push for those improvements in education, health care, and the social safety net that will give them the greatest opportunities to thrive.

## **BCAC by the Numbers** **July 2011 – June 2012**

**5,000** people read BCAC's two reports

**825** parents took BCAC surveys

**1,000** people attended BCAC events

**300** people attended BCAC presentations

**30** references to BCAC appeared in regional media outlets

**15** BCAC Task Force and member organization meetings were organized, involving over 200 people

**100's** of phone calls and emails were placed to generate support for the issues

## Research.



Each year, BCAC produces reports around critical issues for children. These reports provide objective data and information to our community, identify best practices, and propose recommendations to address the problems our children face. BCAC's comprehensive reports are widely distributed and often used as models for similar research by other organizations, not only in Connecticut but across the country.

Our recent research:

- **“The ABCs of Teacher Evaluations: Best Practices to Improve Teaching and Learning,”** which explores the major models used for teacher evaluation nationwide and proposes a plan of action for Bridgeport.
- **“The State of the Child in Bridgeport” 2011 report,** which shows that 30 percent of children in Bridgeport live in poverty, putting them at greater risk for disease, poor nutrition, poor school performance, violence, abuse, and potential homelessness.
- **Our fourth annual recession survey** conducted in partnership with Career Resources, which surveyed over 825 people and found that the economic downturn is still severely impacting people's ability to secure health care, employment, housing, and basic family needs.

## Advocate.



Advocacy is at the heart of BCAC's mission. We believe there is a burning need for people to have the tools to advocate effectively for the causes that are important to them. As a coalition of organizations, parents, and other concerned individuals, we encourage people in a variety of roles to step out, make their own powerful voices heard, and effect positive change.

Our recent advocacy work:

- **Developed the “Bridgeport Children's Bill of Rights for Education”** calling for transparency, fiscal responsibility, and accountability among ten central tenets. The bill drew wide support—it was endorsed by the *Connecticut Post* and was signed by Bridgeport's Mayor Bill Finch and Interim Superintendent Paul Vallas along with over 100 organizations, parents, students, civic leaders, and community members.
- **Testified at numerous local and state public hearings and meetings** on such issues as health care coverage, the education achievement gap, state education funding, and the Bridgeport City Charter Revision Commission recommendations on school governance.
- **Held our 12th annual Children's Issues Forum** in December to discuss education, health care, and safety net services. Four legislators and over 75 parents and community members from Bridgeport and the surrounding communities took part in the event.
- In partnership with the Bridgeport Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), **launched the Civic Engagement 101 workshop** to empower parents with the knowledge and skills to engage at the local, state, and even national levels and effectively advocate for the issues that are important to their families.

## Accessing Health Care: HUSKY

*While BCAC pushed for a future with affordable, comprehensive health care coverage this year, we also continued to address immediate concerns by helping eligible children and their parents apply for HUSKY, the state's health care insurance program for low-income children and their parents.*

*In 2011-2012, we:*

- *Helped 321 children and 106 parents with the HUSKY application process and assisted another 120 adults to determine if they were eligible for other state assistance programs, such as SNAP (formerly known as the Food Stamp program), cash welfare, and Care 4 Kids (child care subsidy).*
- *Organized four HUSKY Outreach Collaborative meetings to identify and address barriers to enrollment.*
- *Fielded over 620 HUSKY-related phone calls.*
- *Made 16 HUSKY presentations, reaching nearly 120 parents.*

## Services Lead to Stability for Bridgeport Mother

Mrs. Lewis is a single mother of two children, ages 6 and 10, who hadn't had health insurance for two years. As a result, her children hadn't seen a doctor or dentist during that time because they couldn't afford the out-of-pocket costs. She worried constantly that they would get sick and she wouldn't be able to afford the care they'd need.

Then, Mrs. Lewis's friend referred her to BCAC. With our help, she applied for state aid and, to her surprise, qualified not only for HUSKY health insurance, but also for cash welfare, SNAP, and Care 4 Kids. When she found out, Mrs. Lewis was so happy and relieved, tears ran down her face. Today, she and her family are closer to achieving a state of economic stability in which her children can thrive.

## Educate.



Knowledge is power. As such, BCAC works to educate parents, legislators, the media, and other members of our community on the issues that most impact children's well-being. Through our education efforts, we shine a light on the challenges facing our children every day and bring the critical issues to the forefront.

Our recent education efforts:

- **Delivered 16 presentations to nearly 120 parents about HUSKY**, the state's health care insurance program for low-income residents.
- **Designed and led a tour to highlight health disparities in our region.** The tour of Bridgeport revealed day-to-day struggles that the city's children and families face to BCAC supporters from Westport, Weston, and Fairfield. In doing so, BCAC has prepared a presentation that we would be happy to share with your organization. If your organization is interested, please contact Mary Pat Healy at 203-549-0075 x11.
- **Developed and distributed nine education fact sheets** on the state takeover of the Bridgeport Board of Education, the Governor's Education Reform Bill, and the Charter Revision Commission and their proposed recommendations on school governance.
- **Cosigned with our partners two op-ed pieces that ran in the *Connecticut Post*** that addressed decisions at the state and local level impacting Bridgeport's schools.

## Mobilize.



At BCAC, we work with parents, community members, public sector officials, legislators, and organizations—harnessing the power of people to move systems forward and create lasting change that will improve the lives of Bridgeport's children and their families.

Our recent mobilizing efforts:

- **Worked with community partners to organize four community forums on education**, including one on state education reform with State Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor and Bridgeport Interim Superintendent Paul Vallas.
- **Signed up nearly 100 individuals and small business owners for healthcare4every1**, the statewide campaign to build support for health care reform.
- **Mobilized over 50 pastors and faith leaders, community leaders, and other stakeholders** from Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Stamford to attend meetings with legislators in the district and at the state Capitol and participate in visibility events for state and federal health care reform.
- **Organized four key meetings between legislators and their constituents** so that voters could raise their concerns about the importance of obtaining affordable health care for their families.

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*"Thanks so much to BCAC for your efforts to keep folks informed. There are many positions and jobs at stake, but most important is that someone continues to focus on what's best for the students and families in Bridgeport, and brings those voices to the table."*

*- Susan, BCAC coalition member*

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If you would like to know how to include BCAC in your estate plans, contact Mary Pat Healy at [mphealy@bcacct.org](mailto:mphealy@bcacct.org) or at 203-549-0075 x11.

We apologize if we have inadvertently omitted your name or organization.

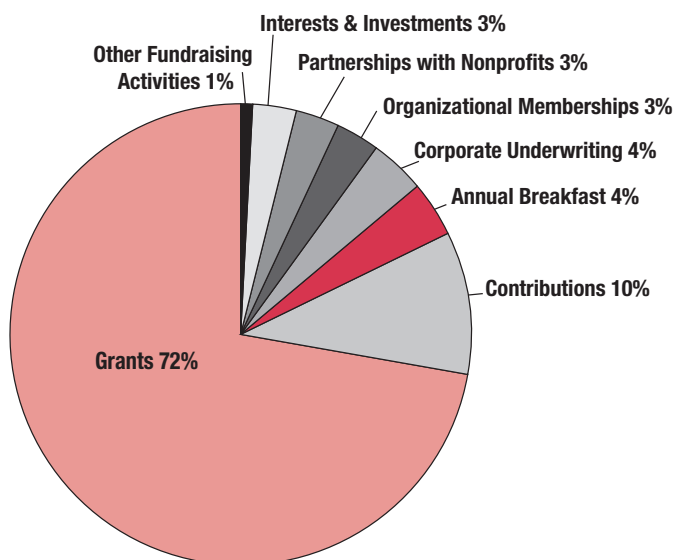


*"It is up to all of us to make sure that progress continues. By working together and advocating with our legislators and policymakers, we can build on our state's successes so that we will achieve affordable, comprehensive health care coverage for all."*

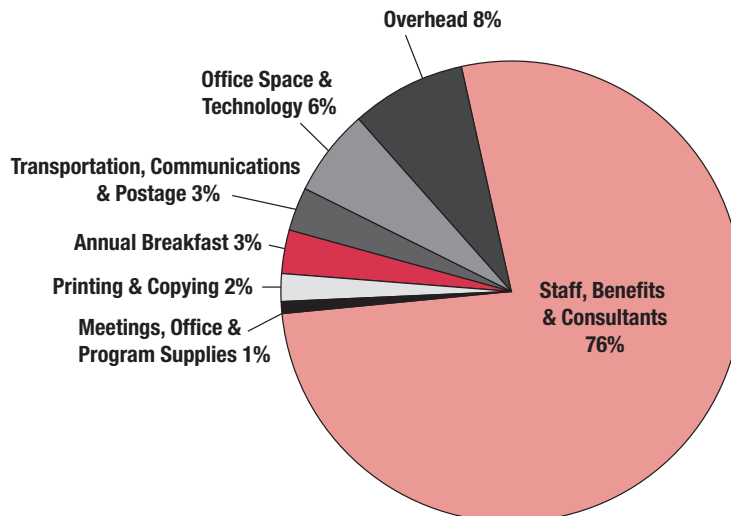
- BCAC letter to the editor, Connecticut Post, 2011

# BCAC Budget July 2011 – June 2012

## INCOME



## EXPENSES





## Connie Rice Inspires at 27th Annual Breakfast Jeanne Milstein, Child Advocate, and Hernan Illingworth, parent leader, honored

Connie Rice—civil rights attorney, child advocate, and noted author of the 2012 book *Power Concedes Nothing*—was the guest speaker at BCAC’s Annual Breakfast in May. She spoke to a crowd of over 300 (including 15 students from the Bridgeport schools) about how Bridgeport serves as a microcosm of her home city of Los Angeles as it struggles with violence, education, health, and poverty issues. She encouraged all present to transform problems into solutions by reaching out to a variety of constituencies and attacking violence at

all levels. We all need to be involved, Rice said, because, “When you have a malaria epidemic, you can’t hand out fly swatters!”

At the Breakfast, BCAC presented Jeanne Milstein with the Jan Park Child Advocacy Award. Milstein served as the “public voice” for children in Connecticut over the past 12 years in the Office of the Child Advocate. We also honored Hernan Illingworth with the Cesar Batalla Community Service Award for his strong leadership with Bridgeport parents and his deep commitment to improving the Bridgeport public schools.

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