

## From Main Street USA to Main Street Bridgeport

### Research, Advocacy, and Mobilization Work!

All across the country, families on Main Streets are facing challenging times. The families who live on Main Street Bridgeport are no different. They, like all Bridgeport families, share the same aspirations as families everywhere – decent housing for their families, a good education for their children, affordable health care, and a chance for a better life. They want the best for their children. So does the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition.

### Spotlight on Bridgeport's Children

BCAC ensures that the needs of Bridgeport's children are front and center. We help our neighbors in the suburbs understand the issues. We make sure that the needs of our children come to the attention of city officials and policy-makers in our state capital. BCAC's Fact Sheets and uncompromising reports shine a bright spotlight on the lives and challenges of Bridgeport's children.

### Promoting Solutions

BCAC does more than report on Bridgeport's children. We research proven models and advocate for innovative solutions to address the challenges that our children must overcome to succeed.

### Mobilizing to Get Results

BCAC brings our community together. Parents, community leaders, clergy, and human service providers unite under BCAC's umbrella to address the challenges facing Bridgeport's children. We build partnerships across our city and with our suburbs to address the challenges our children face. Together, we advocate passionately for solutions that work. More than 400 people joined their voices with BCAC this past year.

### Together We All Support Bridgeport Children

You, our supporters listed in this Annual Report, have joined your voices together as advocates for all of Bridgeport's children. You are the caring community that counts.

More than 400 strong, you made your voices heard. You stood with BCAC. You marched with BCAC. Together, we achieved significant results. We thank you.

We are pleased to send you this annual report to highlight some of BCAC's accomplishments over the last year. Without you, we could not have achieved these successes.



This has been a year of change for BCAC. Our Board of Directors developed a three year Strategic Plan for BCAC and reconfigured our Task Forces into three new Task Forces, each with a broader focus to encourage them to work in a more comprehensive and coordinated way. The 2008-09 Action Agendas for the upcoming year are:

**Children's Health Task Force:** Impact of rising costs of energy on decisions parents make regarding health care and food purchases, and continued work to expand affordable health coverage.

**Education and Early Care Task Force:** Teacher recruitment and retention from preschool through high school and continued work for equitable state funding for education.

**Family Economic Empowerment Task Force:** Affordable housing in Bridgeport and Jobs Funnel to ensure Bridgeport residents benefit from new jobs in development projects.

# mobilizing for change

## community counts

It takes a village to raise a child. And it takes a community to support our children facing all but insurmountable challenges as they navigate their way on the journey to become productive adults. Communities care. Community is all of us working together.

### OUR TASK FORCES BRING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO GET RESULTS FOR OUR CHILDREN

#### **Giving Our Children a Good Start in Life**

##### **BCAC's Early Childhood Task Force**

First, we researched the impact of maternal depression on young children and its prevalence in Bridgeport. We found that maternal depression can cause development delays as well as mental health and behavioral problems among children. Next, we identified best practices and tools for health care providers to screen new mothers for maternal depression. And then we mobilized and advocated for reimbursement for depression screening by the state's children's health insurance program.

**The Result?** The state will now reimburse health care providers for maternal depression screening starting in 2009. The Task Force then organized training for nearly 50 health care providers in Bridgeport on depression screening tools.

#### **Giving Our Children Affordable Health Care**

##### **BCAC's Health Task Force**

The Task Force organized a suburban community forum to demonstrate that health care is an issue that affects urban and suburban residents alike. We received unprecedented bi-partisan support from the Democratic and Republican Town Committees of Fairfield, Westport, and Weston, showing that the cost of health care is an issue that cuts across party lines. At the Forum, we brought together legislators from Fairfield and Westport to hear from suburban residents who told gripping stories of unmet health needs and financial disaster caused by health care costs. Next, we recruited more than 100 small businesses from both the city and suburbs to join the healthcare4every1 campaign. Finally, the Task

Force researched medical specialists for children and found that only a few accept Connecticut's children's health insurance program and we presented these findings to the Connecticut Department of Social Services.

**The Result?** BCAC broadened and strengthened the statewide campaign for affordable health care for everyone.



#### **Giving Our Children Schools In Which They Can Learn**

##### **BCAC's Education Task Force**

The Task Force released our groundbreaking report, "Denied, Delayed and Diverted: Problems with Funding School Repair Projects." We found major problems with the City funding process that left many schools deteriorating due to unfunded, uncompleted school repair projects. We then launched our advocacy campaign directed to the City and Board of Education. To advocate for reforms, we mobilized our community for meetings with the Board of Education and mayor of Bridgeport.

**The Result?** The Board of Education committed to major changes in its identification, prioritization, tracking, and monitoring of school repair projects, bringing transparency to the process. The City has been slower to create transparency and institute reforms. BCAC's advocacy continues.

#### **Giving Our Children a Safe and Decent Home**

##### **BCAC's Public Policy Task Force**

The Task Force focused on the crisis in affordable housing. BCAC produced and distributed thousands of Fact Sheets in our community that told the real story on the proposed 52-acre coastline Steel Point development. We mobilized our community to speak out on the need to include affordable housing and jobs for Bridgeport residents in the Steel Point development. Joining a citywide coalition, we organized our community for news conferences and rallies. Then we mobilized more than 200 people for the city hearing on Steel Point. Finally, we organized an educational workshop for City Council members on city policies that can include affordable housing and jobs for Bridgeport residents as part of new development in the city.

**The Result?** BCAC educated our community and elected officials about policies that support affordable housing and jobs for Bridgeport residents.



### **Educating Our Lawmakers**

Our 2007 Children's Issues Forum at Mount Aery Baptist Church was the scene of "Oscar" awards

presented by Bridgeport children. The agenda: Education, Health Care, and After-School Programs. Supported by more than 100 cheering child advocates, young people spoke to Bridgeport legislators about the need for more education funding and after-school programs. A small business owner spoke about the challenge of providing affordable health insurance to employees. State legislators Andres Ayala, Chris Caruso, Charles Clemons, Ed Gomes and Jack Hennessy attended. Each legislator was awarded a colorful "Oscar" Kid for committing to support each of the issues presented.

### **Tracking Conditions for Our Children and Producing a Report Card**

BCAC's "2007 State of the Child in Bridgeport," our most requested report, educated thousands both inside and outside Bridgeport about the lives and challenges of our children. Our research found that more Bridgeport children than ever are living in poverty. Bridgeport's children fare much worse than other children across the state on every measure of child health and well-being. The 2007 report contains a Report Card on Bridgeport's children that gave five A+'s, for improvement in infant mortality, school dropout rate, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, and air pollution. But we gave F's for continuing declines in availability of affordable housing and after-school programs, and an increase in juvenile arrests for violent crime.



### **giving our children visibility**

Media coverage helps Bridgeport's children by highlighting issues important to children and raising awareness of the challenges facing Bridgeport's children. Members of the media continue to seek out BCAC's opinion and comments on major issues affecting children. News coverage and editorials on children's issues quote BCAC's research, Fact Sheets and reports. Radio talk shows invite BCAC to discuss children's issues. During this last year, BCAC was featured, quoted, or our information used in news stories, editorials, letters to the editor, and radio programs more than 100 times.

### **Highlighting Solutions to Child Poverty**

BCAC brought together nearly 400 people for its annual breakfast conference to hear Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs describe New York City's innovative strategies to reduce poverty. The conference, entitled "Outside the Box," was held in partnership with Casey Family Services. Gibbs' keynote speech generated excitement and enthusiasm and inspired hundreds of child advocates in our community. We honored Rae Sharp, retired Executive Director of Ralphola Taylor Community Center/YMCA, with BCAC's Cesar Bataalla Community Service Award. Kris Hazzard, former Executive Director of Center for Women and Families, received BCAC's Jan Park Child Advocacy Award. We thank Altrushare Securities, The Community's Bank, The Estate of Ruth Krauss, and GE for being Gold Level Sponsors for the conference.



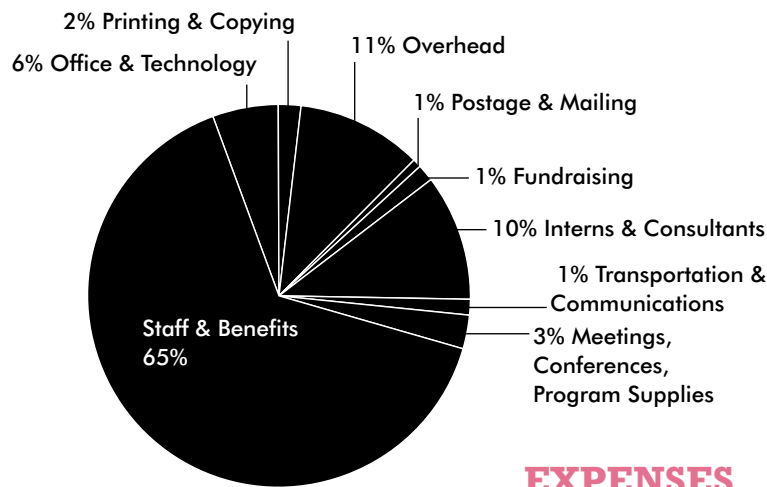
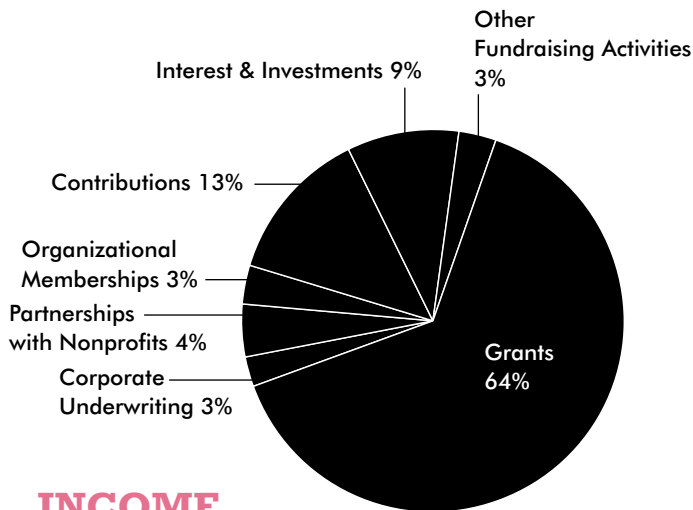
### **Giving Our Children Healthy Mothers BCAC's Substance Abusing Women and Their Children Task Force**

The Substance Abusing Women and Their Children Task Force researched gender disparities in state funding for substance abuse treatment services between Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven. It presented its findings to the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and advocated for increased services for mothers recovering from addiction and for their children.

Please see our newly re-designed website, [www.bcacct.org](http://www.bcacct.org), for more information about our 2007-2008 accomplishments and our plans for 2008-2009.

# BCAC BUDGET 2007-08

\$585,153



## INCOME

Total does not equal 100% because of rounding.

## EXPENSES

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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.