



RESEARCH

ADVOCATE

MOBILIZE

EDUCATE

2013 Annual Report



BCAC works to create systems change that improve outcomes for all Bridgeport youth. Pictured here are members of Bridgeport's Bassick High School dance team. Photo credit: Bassick High School photography students.

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.

A Year of Transitions

This year, we wished our steadfast Director of Policy and Research, Barbara Edinberg, best of luck as she began her retirement. Barbara dedicated 26 years and immeasurable passion to BCAC and the city's children and families. We had the honor of recognizing her for her contribution at our Annual Breakfast in May with a special "Behind the Change" award. Last fall, we welcomed Robin Lamott Sparks, BCAC's new Senior Director of Policy and Research. Robin quickly became an integral member of the team and has made vital contributions, bringing to the organization an impressive background in policy and communications—and boundless energy!

Togetherness. This simple word defines so much of what the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition accomplished over the last year. Together, we gave voice to the pain of violence in our community—and collaborated to inspire change. Together, we worked to stay on top of developments in health care and ensure that all parents and children have access to quality, affordable care. Together, we sought out the facts about how our children are faring in school, and continued to advocate for better educational outcomes for all.

Moving forward, Bridgeport needs an independent, grassroots coalition like ours—a diverse and motivated coalition of parents and grandparents, community members, civic leaders, clergy, doctors, teachers, business leaders, social service providers and YOU. Together, we can find lasting solutions that clear a path to a better future for our children.



The BCAC team (from left to right): Mary Pat Healy, Mory Hernandez, Lazaro Corro Benites, Barbara Edinberg, Nicole Bass, Robin Lamott Sparks

Honors and Opportunities

BCAC staff members were honored to advocate for children's issues at a number of special events this year:

- Mary Pat Healy, Executive Director, received a Community Service Award from Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD).
- Lazaro Corro Benites, Health Care Organizer, received a Community Service Award from the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses.
- Mory Hernandez, Health Care Community Organizer, was invited to speak on a statewide panel of community health workers hosted by SCSU and the Department of Public Health.
- Robin Lamott Sparks, Senior Director of Policy and Research, was invited to speak on a panel hosted by the Connecticut Association for Human Services called "Honoring Our Commitment: Building a Stronger Future for Connecticut's Children."

Transforming a Culture of Violence

Over the past year and a half, BCAC has brought together people from across our community to talk about the impact of violence on education, healthcare and the community as a whole. The initiative focuses on violence as a public health issue and includes a series of open meetings to examine the causes of violence in Bridgeport, research on best practices for curbing violence from other cities across the country, and the development of a city-wide response model. More than 120 people have come out to join in this grassroots effort—teens and parents, police officers and doctors, social workers and business owners, mayors and clergy members—all with the common goal to end violence in our community.

RESEARCH

Research is the foundation for everything BCAC does. We gather data from a variety of sources and share it with the community so we have a common basis for understanding the issues facing children and families.

2012-2013 research highlights:

- Released the 27th annual *State of the Child in Bridgeport* report, which compares the well-being of children in Bridgeport to children statewide.
- Worked with education leaders to update BCAC's past research into education issues, including school climate and suspensions, teacher turnover and retention, and special education.
- Conducted the fifth annual survey of over 500 jobseekers together with Career Resources at their job fair in March.
- Partnered with area colleges and universities to conduct research, including a project with SCSU public health graduate students that compared health indicators for Bridgeport children with children in surrounding suburbs.



Students participate in a forum on addressing violence as a public health issue last winter.



Monica Jackson participates in a BCAC workshop that empowers parents to effectively advocate for issues important to their families.

ADVOCATE

With the data in hand, BCAC helps families and others in the community push for what children need. For us, advocacy starts at home, in schools, and in neighborhoods and, from there, moves out to the halls of government. Change is ignited when people find and raise their collective voices.

2012-2013 advocacy highlights:

- Held our 13th annual Children's Issues Dialogue, which brought four legislators, two city council members, the chief of police, and the superintendent of schools together with over 80 parents and community members to discuss the impact of violence on education, health and the community as a whole.
- Met with state and local lawmakers to advocate for quality, affordable health care through the new state health care marketplace, Access Health CT.
- Helped 162 children and 91 parents obtain HUSKY, CT's health insurance, and other state assistance programs such as SNAP, Care4Kids, and TANF.
- Tracked health care, education, early care, job training, and human services legislation and submitted testimonies to the Education, Human Services, and Appropriations committees.

BCAC's 28th Annual Breakfast Gathers and Inspires

BCAC welcomed an exciting array of over 300 guests to its 28th Annual Breakfast in May. The morning was characterized by both great energy and great urgency. We honored five special people who have worked long and hard to promote the well-being of the city's children and heard from leading public health scholar and violence prevention expert, Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith.

"And if we really want to do something about violence in America, it's our opportunity to cut across those things that divide us, understand that our risk to violence is one that is preventable, that we can do something about it. It's a big challenge, but we're up to it. We are really up to it."

Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, speaking at BCAC's 28th Annual Breakfast

2013 BCAC Breakfast honorees

Cesar Batalla Community Service Award – Linda Goldenberg and Raymond Torres of Casey Family Services

Jan Park Advocacy Award – Nancy Lefkowitz and Meg Staunton, co-founders of March for Change

Behind the Change Award – Barbara Edinberg, formerly of BCAC



From left to right: Raymond Torres, Ron Pinciaro, Barbara Edinberg, Jane Norgren, Nancy Lefkowitz, Meg Staunton, Linda Goldenberg, Lisa LaBella, Mary Pat Healy.



A Bridgeport delegation, including many BCAC members, arrives at the March for Change in Hartford on February 14th.

EDUCATE

When it comes to the systems and policies that affect children and families, things are always changing. Our coalition works to make sure everyone in the community has the information they need to give children a healthy, happy start.

2012-2013 education highlights:

- Helped parents navigate special education services in Bridgeport by hosting parent focus groups, organizing two educational workshops with the Center for Children's Advocacy, and producing a new "Parent's Guide to Special Education Services in Bridgeport."
- Educated families around the changing health care landscape, making 12 presentations about HUSKY, CT's state health insurance, distributing fact sheets and making eight presentations on state and federal health reform, and organizing a regional meeting on state health care reform efforts with 50 participants from Stamford, Norwalk and Bridgeport.
- Informed members of the Greater Bridgeport community about the region's economic disparities by making presentations to civic organizations, speaking out through local print, broadcast and online media outlets, and conducting "disparity tours" in partnership with the Community Services Division of the Bridgeport Police Department.

MOBILIZE

When our coalition comes together to mobilize for children, we really show our strength. BCAC gathers a diversity of people to share their experiences, show their support, and step out on behalf of Bridgeport's children and families.

2012-2013 mobilization highlights:

- Worked to address violence as a public health issue through our Children's Issues Dialogue, two special community forums and our Annual Breakfast. With these events, BCAC mobilized over 480 people to eradicate violence and its impact on education, health care, and the community as a whole.
- Campaigned for the passage of Connecticut's landmark gun safety legislation by urging our network members to contact their legislators, submit testimony, share information on social media, and march on the state capitol.
- Helped 37,500 Connecticut families keep their HUSKY-A state health coverage by participating in a rally to bring the message directly to lawmakers and mobilizing network members to lobby their Representatives.

BCAC gratefully acknowledges and thanks our supporters!

Gifts made between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013



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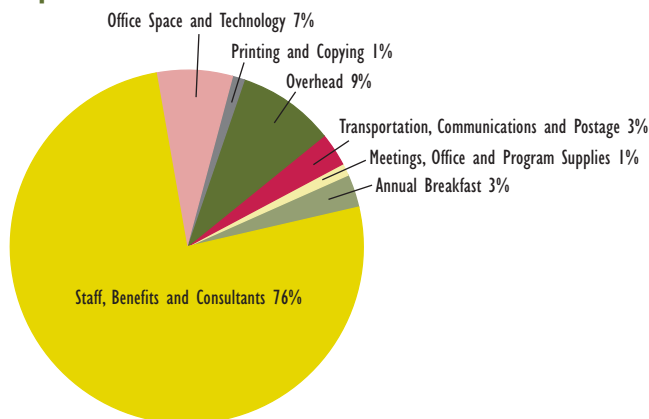
In May, BCAC said goodbye to one of our visionary founders, Janice Park, who passed away at the age of 89. Jan helped establish BCAC in 1985 and served as its chair for over a decade. At that time, she was already in the twilight of a career wholly dedicated to the children of Bridgeport. With her strong voice for children and ability to bring people together, Jan set in motion a model that has mobilized thousands of people to advocate for Bridgeport children and families in the decades since.



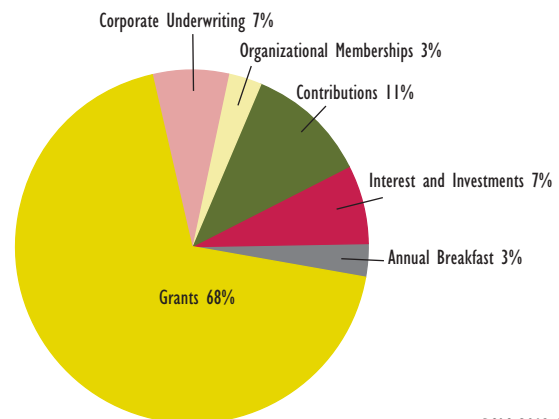
Jan Park, pictured here with Barbara Edinberg (rear left) and BCAC Board member Helen Wasserman (rear right).

BCAC Budget July 2012—June 2013

Expenses



Income





Sughey Valdez works on Mory Hernandez's hair in an East Side salon.

Sughey's Story

BCAC works to identify families in the Greater Bridgeport area that qualify for state assistance programs and helps them with the application process every step of the way. Sughey Valdez, a single mother of four daughters, explains what a difference this program has made for her and her family:

"I relocated to Connecticut from New York City several years ago. I had no family and didn't know anyone in Bridgeport. Shortly after I relocated, my daughter got very sick and was hospitalized for four days. I was very scared because I barely spoke English, and I wasn't financially stable. I knew that I would start receiving the medical bills, and I wondered how I was going to pay for them.

"A couple of weeks after my daughter had been discharged, the bills began to arrive. If I recall correctly, they totaled about \$8,700. I began to feel sick. I had to do something, and I had to do it fast, because the bills kept coming in, collection agencies were calling my home, etc. Finally, I was able to get a loan and open a hair salon.

"One day, Mory Hernandez (BCAC's Health Care Community Organizer) came into my establishment, introduced herself as being from the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, and explained the work that she was doing. Mory was like my guardian angel at that very moment. The fact that someone was actually looking for families who may qualify for these programs instead of someone losing an entire day at a state office was just unbelievable.

"I jumped at the opportunity, and I was screened. Surprisingly enough, I qualified for the SNAP program (formerly food stamps) and the HUSKY program. I was so happy I cried tears of joy because I remember the hospital worker telling me that if I qualified, the hospital bills would be covered.

"Today, I have NO medical bills, and my daughters and I are covered under the HUSKY program. I give thanks everyday for meeting Mory. With her assistance, my children and I have been able to go for routine visits, sick visits, and one of my daughters even has braces. And, Mory not only assisted me with my issues, she also became one of my clients!"

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