

Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition

BCAC

Mobilizing on behalf of children



ANNUAL REPORT 2006

BCAC has just completed another busy and productive year, with all of our six Task Forces working hard on key initiatives to better the lives of children. Our Task Forces have worked tirelessly on improving early childhood development, education, school safety, health, housing, and family support for our children.

This year, our Task Forces have released a number of important reports, which examine the hardships Bridgeport children are facing and propose solutions to address them. These publications have covered childhood obesity among children birth to age 4, wide variations in the price of prescription medications, violence in Bridgeport schools, and the overall state of children in Bridgeport.

In addition to these reports, BCAC has been doing much work to educate and mobilize the Greater Bridgeport Area community on behalf of children. Some of the accomplishments of BCAC's 2005-2006 fiscal year are highlighted in this report.

As we move forward, we will continue to work hard so that all children grow up with the tools they need to reach their full potential.

BCAC ANNUAL BREAKFAST CONFERENCE

On March 23, 2006 at the Holiday Inn in Bridgeport, BCAC held its Annual Breakfast Conference in partnership with Casey Family Services. This year's conference brought together more than 400 elected and government officials, parents, community leaders, service providers, donors, foundations, and BCAC Board members.

The keynote speaker for this event was Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist David Shipler, whose recent book, "The Working Poor: Invisible in America," explores the struggles of low-income families and proposes strategies to move them from poverty to achievement of the American dream.

"As the gap between rich and poor widens and the middle class disappears, more and more of our children are growing up in poor working families," Mr. Shipler noted in his presentation. *"In Connecticut, the gap between rich and poor is one of the widest in the country."* He emphasized that addressing the challenges facing the working poor is one of the most important issues facing our nation today.

Each year, BCAC recognizes volunteers for their vision and commitment to improving the lives of Bridgeport's children and families. This year's Cesar Batalla Community Service Award was presented to Richard Tenenbaum, Connecticut Legal Services. Frances Newby, a parent leader, was the recipient of the 2006 Jan Park Child Advocacy Award.

The breakfast conference was underwritten by support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Community's Bank, GE, William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, People's Bank, and the Southern Connecticut Gas Company.



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"Mobilizing on Behalf of Children"

Prescription Drugs



BCAC's Health Task Force was joined at our March news conference by Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal for the release of our groundbreaking report, **"The Price of Prescription Drugs: It Matters Where You Live."** Our report gained wide news coverage throughout Connecticut and as far away as the Boston Globe and Long Island's Newsday.

This in-depth report uncovered significant disparities in prescription drug prices among pharmacies in Bridgeport and its suburbs. The facts revealed in it astonished us and Connecticut's Attorney General.

BCAC worked with students from Harding High School Health Magnet to survey 29 pharmacies in Bridgeport, Fairfield, Stratford, and Trumbull for the cost of 13 prescription drugs for children and families. The findings revealed a number of disturbing discrepancies in prices of prescription medicines filled in Bridgeport and the

surrounding suburbs. The cost of a "market basket" of all 13 prescription medicines varied as much as \$224 per month, a 25% difference. The lesson: It pays to shop around.

School Violence



Last year, in response to growing community concern, BCAC's Violence Prevention Task Force decided to take an in-depth look at the violence in Bridgeport's public schools. Our subsequent report, **"You Can't Learn If You Don't Feel Safe: School Security Problems in the Bridgeport Schools and What Can Be Done,"** uncovered some alarming statistics about school violence. The report also made a series of recommendations to address school violence based on successful

approaches being used in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati.

BCAC released the findings of the report in January 2006 at a news conference. Dr. John Ramos, Superintendent of Bridgeport Public Schools, joined BCAC to discuss his plan for addressing school violence. As a result of BCAC's partnership with the Board of Education, Superintendent Ramos included most of BCAC's recommendations in his School Safety and Security Plan.



2006

highlights

of BCAC's
dedicated work
on behalf of
Bridgeport's
children

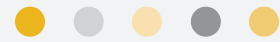
PRODUCED our first-ever video in collaboration with Fairfield University, featuring parents and teens speaking on affordable housing, education, and after-school programs. The video proved a powerful tool in helping our greater Bridgeport community understand these issues and how they impact children and families.

HELD Children's Issues Forums to educate the public and our elected representatives about children's needs, reaching over 275 community residents and 9 regional legislators.

ORGANIZED training for providers on how to work with parents with cognitive limitations, reaching over 200 service providers from a wide range of nonprofit organizations and state agencies.



State of the Child in Bridgeport



BCAC produced its annual “**State of the Child in Bridgeport**” report for our community and policy-makers at the state and local level. This well-respected and well-read report provides comprehensive statistical data on Bridgeport children including child poverty, children living in homeless shelters, the number of child abuse and neglect cases, drug use among Bridgeport youth, and the dropout rate in Bridgeport high schools. It also contains a Report Card on progress compared to the previous year and compared to the state average.

More than 5,000 copies are distributed annually. BCAC thanks its corporate underwriters: GE, Purdue Pharma, Community Health Network, People’s Bank, and The United Illuminating Company. Pitney Bowes printed the report for BCAC.

5 Major Reports

Early Childhood Obesity



BCAC’s Health Task Force continued its critical work on childhood obesity publishing a report, “**Weighing In: Early Childhood Obesity in Bridgeport.**” Our report documented a rate of childhood obesity among pre-school children in Bridgeport that is twice the national average, with only two

out of three young children in Bridgeport at a healthy weight.

In the report, we offered recommendations for parents and child care providers to help very young children become more active and eat more nutritious food. BCAC then followed up by providing training for child care providers.

WORKED with the Bridgeport Housing Authority to make changes to increase the supply of affordable housing for low-income families. The end result: 400 more families have affordable housing.

ORGANIZED 18 house meetings with over 160 parents to talk about their experiences accessing health care, and brought them together into a large meeting to launch our campaign for health care for all.

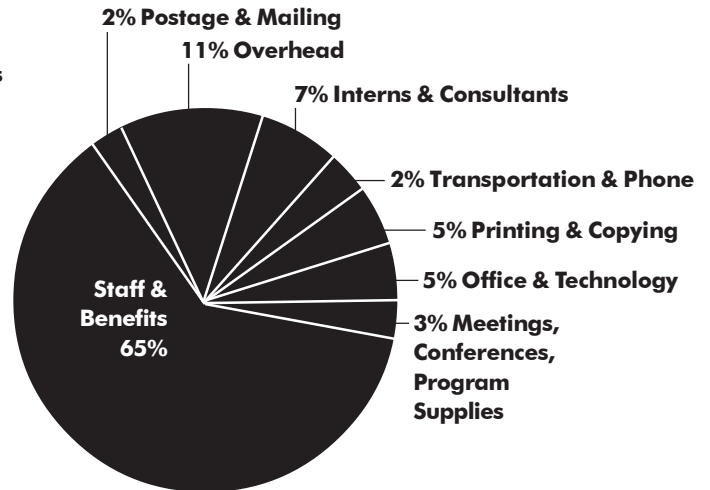
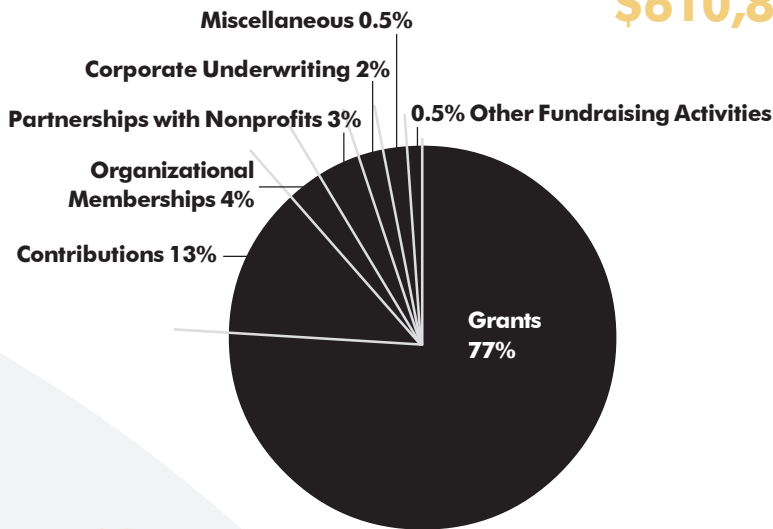
PRODUCED our annual Children’s Legislative Agenda describing the legislative priorities of our six Task Forces as well as our annual Legislative Report Card reporting on how our regional legislators voted on proposals important to children and families.

COORDINATED a highly successful workshop, “New Trends in Addiction and Women: What Works and What Doesn’t,” for 50 Bridgeport-based service providers.

As part of our Leave No City Behind Campaign, **ORGANIZED** 45 parents and community leaders to meet with State Education Commissioner Betty Sternberg and OPM Secretary and state budget director Bob Genuario to advocate for correction of inequities in state education funding that have shortchanged Bridgeport schools by more than \$140 million over the last seven years. Also advocated for prompt enforcement of state education laws and the series of state audits of the City of Bridgeport’s contribution to its schools that would require the city to invest an additional \$3 million in education.

BCAC BUDGET 2005-06

\$610,891



INCOME

EXPENSES



BCAC's mission is to improve the well-being of Bridgeport's children through a program combining research, community planning, advocacy, community education, and mobilization. BCAC promotes policies and programs to ensure that all children have the opportunity to grow up healthy and safe, and to receive the education and skills necessary to reach their full potential.



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