



Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
Mobilizing for Children

ANNUAL REPORT

2011



Today, the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition's (BCAC) work is more important than ever to give our children a fighting chance and our community a more promising future. Parents continue to lose jobs, their health insurance and their housing. Children face hunger, poor health, struggles in school and potential homelessness. Children and their families will continue to be at great risk unless we act collectively and collaboratively. We must continue to shine a light on the challenges facing our children and their families. Together, we can make a significant impact on so many lives.

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"The fact is: public servants – the teachers, mentors and volunteers who work with our youth – are as imperative to our national standing and survival as our armed forces." Wes Moore, BCAC Annual Breakfast

26th Annual Breakfast



The 26th Annual Breakfast featured Wes Moore, youth advocate, army combat veteran, Rhodes Scholar and businessman. He is the author of *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*, a story about his life and that of another man with the same name, about the same age, and from the same neighborhood, who was arrested and convicted of murdering an off-duty police officer.

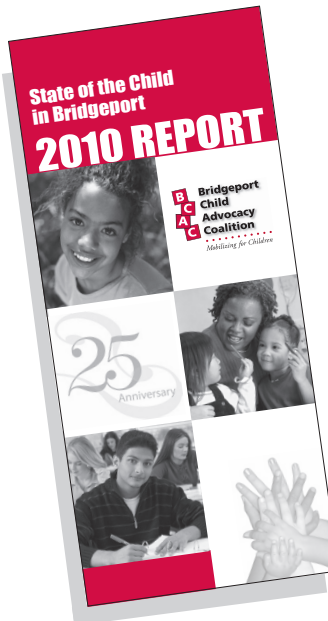
Over 400 people heard Wes Moore's powerful address, emphasizing the life and death impact that choices and responsibility play for both individuals and our society. "For those of us who live in the most precarious places in the country, our destinies can be determined by a single stumble down the wrong path, or a tentative step toward the right one," explained Moore. "The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his."



Forty students attended the Breakfast and met privately afterwards with Mr. Moore for a morning they will never forget. Wes Moore was compelling, inspirational and, without question, had a profound impact on the students in attendance.

BCAC presented State Comptroller Kevin Lembo with the Jan Park Child Advocacy Award and Optimus Health Care and Southwest Community Health Center with the Cesar Batalla Community Service Award.

State of the Child on the Road



The 25th Anniversary edition of BCAC's *State of the Child in Bridgeport* contained compelling statistics. This year, we took the State of the Child on the road, making presentations to civic groups in Bridgeport, Fairfield, Norwalk and Orange, CT. The presentations shed light on the challenges and consequences of child poverty and the inequities amongst communities.

BCAC by the Numbers 2010-2011

5,000 people read BCAC's three reports

663 parents took BCAC surveys

1,300 people attended BCAC events

400 people attended a BCAC presentation

28 references to BCAC cited in regional media outlets

15 Task Force and member organization meetings organized with more than 230 people

100's of phone calls and e-mails generated to support the issues

“Now is the time for all of us – the schools, the parents, the community, the city, the state and the unions – to bring new ideas to the table, examine how things can be done in a different yet more effective and efficient way, and advocate for the resources we need to educate Bridgeport students.”

BCAC Letter to the Editor, CT Post, 6/21/11

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Ensuring the Parent Voice in Bridgeport's Education System



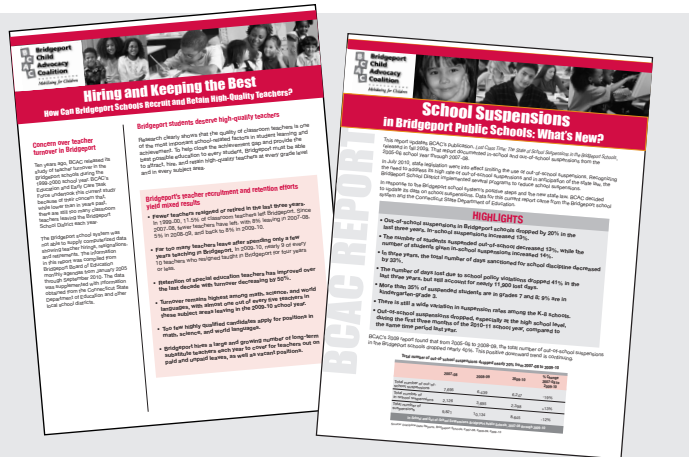
This past July, the Bridgeport Board of Education voted in support of a resolution for a state reconstitution. In August 2011, the new Board of Education was named. Parents have been naturally frustrated and worried about their children's education and many felt disenfranchised with the process by which the reconstitution took place. With events in local education occurring at breakneck speed, BCAC's role as an objective voice has continued to be more important than ever.

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What has been BCAC's Role?

- Monitored the school budget process by attending all five Board of Education Finance Committee meetings.
- Mobilized parents to attend and testify at the school budget hearing.
- Presented testimony at the State Department of Education meeting raising questions about the process by which the Board of Education was reconstituted and the lack of parent and community involvement.
- Invited guests on WVOF and WNPR radio programs.
- Partnered with PLTI (Bridgeport Parent Leadership Training Institute), District PAC (Parent Advisory Council) and the Bridgeport Parent Center to organize a community meeting with Superintendent Ramos; more than 250 parents attended.
- Worked with our community partners to organize a community meeting with State Department of Education Acting Commissioner George Coleman; more than 200 parents attended.

Our work is far from finished and we will continue to be a watchdog moving forward. Our advocacy efforts and objectivity are increasingly necessary to ensure that Bridgeport schools have the resources they need to provide a quality education and that parents stay engaged in the process.



Hiring and Keeping the Best

In the fall 2010, we released our report, *Hiring and Keeping the Best: How Can Bridgeport Schools Recruit and Retain High Quality Teachers?* Our research found significant improvements in retaining special education teachers and, at the same time, serious challenges staffing core subjects, such as math, science and foreign languages. We also found that the Bridgeport school district suffers from a revolving door of teacher turnover. Newer teachers are much more likely to leave and then have to be replaced, taking a serious toll on student learning and the district's budget.

Tracking School Suspensions and Reporting on Positive Change

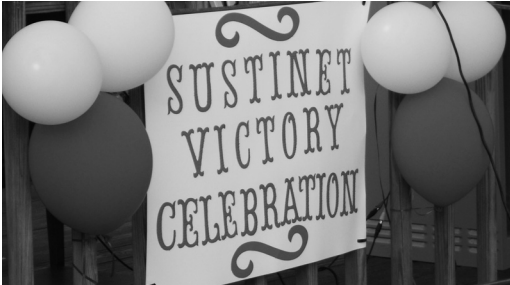
In 2009, we released a report on school suspensions in the Bridgeport schools. In July 2010, state law went into effect limiting the use of out-of-school suspensions. During the 2010-11 school year, the Bridgeport school district implemented several programs to reduce suspensions, including in-school suspension programs in all schools. We responded and released our publication, *Suspensions in the Bridgeport Schools: What's New?* The report showed that the Bridgeport school district made great strides in reducing out-of-school suspensions. In the last three years, the district reduced the number of out-of-school suspensions by 1,445. At the same time, however, in-school suspensions increased by 272.

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"The time to act is now. We cannot wait any longer for a solution to our broken health care system."

BCAC Letter to the Editor, CT Post, 5/20/11

Affordable, Quality Health Care Within Reach



We kept health care reform high on the radar screen by educating the community about Connecticut's health care reform law, SustiNet, and by strengthening our grassroots efforts in the Latino community.

Working hand-in-hand with the statewide health-care4every1 campaign, we helped move the state closer to making affordable, quality health care coverage a reality in Connecticut. We accomplished this by:

- Organizing two events in Stamford and one in Bridgeport to thank our healthcare4every1 supporters; more than 500 joined us in celebration.
- Making 16 presentations throughout the region on "de-mystifying" health care reform to a wide range of community groups, including churches and synagogues, senior citizens, parent groups and nonprofit organizations.
- Organizing six meetings with state senators and more than 100 constituents from southern Fairfield County.
- Publishing three letters to the editor, contributing material for 13 newspaper articles and participating in two radio interviews.
- Mobilizing more than 100 parents and clergy to attend the Governor's Town Hall meetings held throughout Fairfield County.

THE RESULTS: In June 2011, the state legislature passed the Health Care Reform Bill. The bill established a new SustiNet Health Care Cabinet responsible for integrating state and federal health care reform measures, reducing state health care spending and creating a business plan to explore alternatives to our current health insurance system, including a public option.

Helping Low-Income Children and Their Parents Obtain Insurance

With unemployment in Bridgeport hovering at 14%, many parents are losing their jobs and their health insurance benefits. We continued our aggressive outreach efforts to enroll parents and children in the state's HUSKY health insurance program. During the year, BCAC helped 488 children and 121 parents apply for or renew their HUSKY coverage.

Residents Voice Concerns at Children's Issues Forum



BCAC's annual Bridgeport Children's Issues Forum was held in December 2010. More than 100 Bridgeport residents met with seven of the area's legislators:

Bridgeport's Rep. Andres Ayala, Rep. Chris Caruso, Rep. Donald Clemons, Senator Ed Gomes, Rep. Auden Grogins and Rep. Jack Hennessy, and Fairfield's Rep. Kim Fawcett. During the discussions, legislators reported on the fiscal and social services forecast at the state level and residents addressed critical children's issues, including health care, education and the importance of preserving state-funded safety net services.

Families in the Recession



In March 2011, we partnered with Career Resources and conducted our third annual survey to determine the impact of the recession on health care, employment, housing and basic family needs. We surveyed more than 650 job seekers and found that many

people in the greater Bridgeport area are still worried about feeding their families, are out of work for longer periods of time, have lost their health insurance and are facing a "cliff" of housing and debt crisis when unemployment benefits end.

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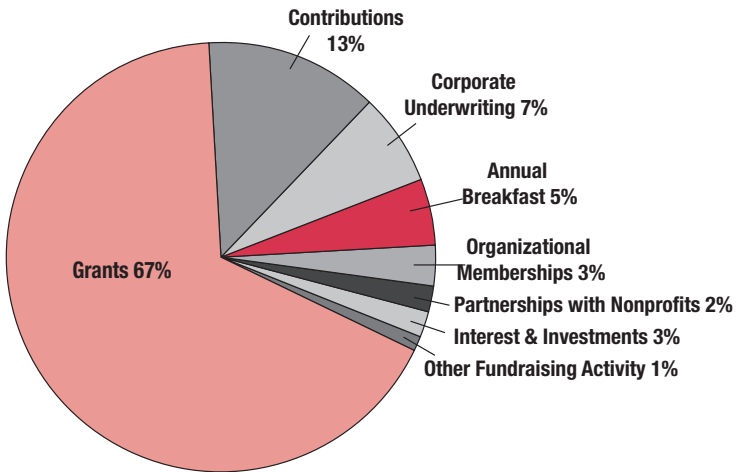
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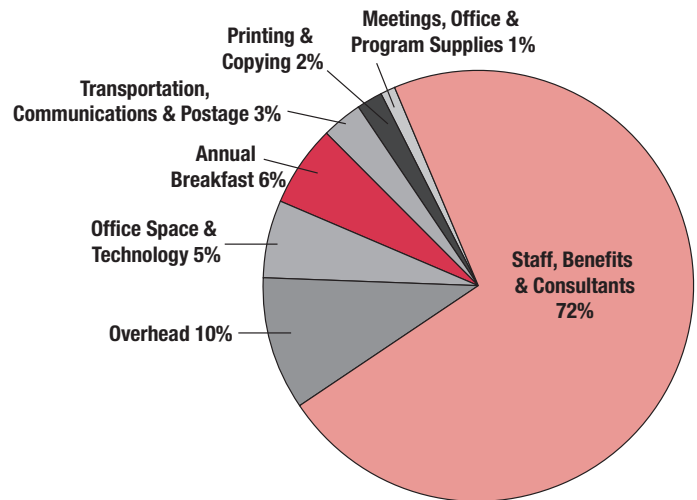
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BCAC Budget 2010-2011

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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.

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