

Arkansas School-Age "LINKS"

ASU Childhood
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School-Age
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Introduction

Community involvement and formalized partnerships in support of out of school time programs is associated with significant benefits for the youth involved in such programs including positive outcomes and traditionally higher quality programs. Whether it is partnering with non-profit organizations or corporations with a philanthropic interest, businesses, schools, institutions of higher education, families, other youth serving organizations, legislators, or others, community partnerships provide opportunities to develop out of school time programs that support a wider variety of needs within the community while at the same time provide the opportunity to develop strategies that help leverage support for these programs. In this special edition we will highlight various entities and recent projects that each in their own way are successfully working with others to identify problems and issues while working together with others to bring about change that will best support the children, youth, and families of Arkansas.

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The Positive Youth Development Grant Program—Act 166

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**Submitted by: Laveta Wills-Hale,
Network Coordinator, AOSN**

One of the key successes for children and youth during the 2011 session of the Arkansas General Assembly was the passage of the Positive Youth Development Grant Program {Act 166). For the first time in Arkansas, a specific piece of legislation will target the needs of school-age youth with support for school based or school-linked and community based youth development programs offering high quality, developmentally appropriate experiences during the out-of-school time hours. According to the *Arkansas After 3PM* Report developed by the Afterschool Alliance, Arkansas' children and youth spend an average of nine hours in self-care each week and approximately 26% (125,000) of Arkansas' children and youth grades K-12 are on their own afterschool and during the summer months. Priority will be given to programs located within school districts that have high free and reduced lunch rates or school districts that are in School Improvement.

The overall goal of Act 166 was to expand the availability of positive youth development programs and to implement the standards and recommendations of the 2008 report of the Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for Afterschool and Summer Programs. The intent of this enabling legislation was to determine the administrative oversight and structure of a statewide system of afterschool and summer programs. While no appropriation was attached to this particular legislation, it authorized the Arkansas Dept. of Education and the Division of

Child Care and Early Childhood Education to establish the rules and regulations that will govern the program when funding becomes available.

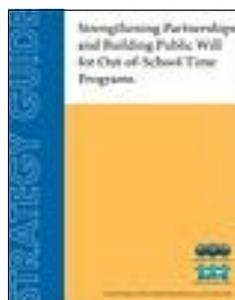
As one of thirty-eight statewide afterschool networks around the country working to support and expand the availability of quality afterschool and summer programs, AOSN has played a key role since 2005 in convening and partnering with other stakeholders to bring about this successful development in public policy. A Joint Coordinating Committee was established in the fall of 2010 to form a working group to develop a framework for the legislation. Representatives of this group included the AOSN, ASU Childhood Services, the U of A Cooperative Extension - 4-H Youth Development Program, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Arkansas, the City of Little Rock Community Programs, the Arkansas Education Association, the Association of Education Administrators, the Little Rock Workforce Investment Board, the Arkansas Department of Education, the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, the Division of Youth Services, Save the Children, members of the Governor's Task Force on Afterschool and Summer Programs, and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. In addition, AOSN solicited feedback on the draft legislation from its membership and key supporters. The public was encouraged to send in written comments and to post comments to the AOSN website under the *Positive Youth Development Blog* that was established solely for that purpose.

The passage of this legislation was made possible by leveraging existing partnerships and forming new ones. The AOSN, Save the Children, and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families worked together to develop a public education campaign entitled “*Afterschool is Key*” and to conduct two rounds of public opinion polling. These efforts were designed to educate the public about the benefits of quality afterschool and summer programs and to determine the level of public support for a state funded system of youth development programs. Another key supporter of Act 166 was the Public Policy Panel and the Opportunity to Learn Campaign (OTL). The OTL Campaign was established to ensure that education policies and education funding were developed and utilized in the most effective ways possible. The OTL Campaign Advisory Committee identified quality afterschool and summer programs as a proven method for addressing the Achievement Gap and adopted the passage of the Positive Youth Development Grant Program {Act 166} as one of its key legislative priorities for the 2011 session.

In the months ahead, the Arkansas Department of Education and the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will begin identifying internal teams to work with outside groups to develop the rules and regulations. Many of the same stakeholders who helped draft the legislation will have an opportunity to provide input. AOSN and other organizations will have an important role to play in the months ahead to keep their stakeholders informed and engaged as this process moves forward. At the same time, AOSN, along with its

key partners, will work to strengthen its public education efforts to lay the foundation to secure a legislative appropriation in the future.

Check Out this Resource!



Strengthening Partnerships and Building Public Will for Out-of-School-Time Programs

To view this report in its entirety visit:

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/Out-Of-SchoolLearning/Documents/strengthening-partnerships-building-public-will-for-out-of-school-time-programs.pdf>

Mayors, city council members and other city leaders have devoted more attention in recent years to developing citywide systems of after-school, summer and other out-of-school time (OST) programming. An important part of this effort has been to inform the public about the value of after-school opportunities and garner support for them. Another has been to encourage a range of government agencies, community groups, education officials and others to work together on building better OST. This example-filled guide by the National League of Cities, created with Wallace Foundation support, describes three strategies municipal leaders have used successfully to advance after-school programming: involving many organizations and agencies in the OST effort; keeping after-school on the public agenda; and heading the development of shared vision for after-school and other out-of-school time opportunities.

Strengthening Communities Fund: Building Capacity in Neighborhood Programs

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**Submitted by: Mark Perry, Executive Director,
New Futures for Youth**

New Futures for Youth in partnership with the City of Little Rock and the United States Department of Health and Human Services is implementing Little Rock's Strengthening Communities Fund Nonprofit Capacity Building Program (SCF). The SCF program is a national initiative funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and designed to build capacity in Little Rock's grassroots non-profit organizations to address broad economic recovery issues present in the community including helping low-income individuals secure and retain employment, earn higher wages, obtain better quality jobs and gain greater access to State and Federal benefits and tax credits. From the fall of 2009 through the fall of 2011, the City of Little Rock is providing \$200,000 in matching resources leveraging an additional \$800,000 in Federal funds from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services to support Little Rock's SCF initiative.

The funding supports capacity building for Faith-based and Community Organizations (FBCO's) in distressed neighborhoods in Little Rock where the poverty rate is above 30%, where more than 60% of the City's unemployed people live, and where the high school graduation rate for students is below 66%. A total of 24 capacity-building awards up to \$20,000 each and intensive capacity building opportunities have been made to FBCO's in the program area since the fall of 2009.

The SCF capacity building work uses a three-part approach—"one-on-one" technical assistance with New Futures staff, a skills development institute providing 25 professional development trainings for staff of FBCO's, and service coordination and resource sharing among the participating organizations—to improve the overall effectiveness of FBCO's. This approach is designed to enhance operating efficiency and expand and diversify organizations' resource potential by focusing on capacity building in the following five critical areas: Organizational Development, Program Development, Collaboration and Community Engagement, Leadership Development, and Evaluation of Effectiveness. Developing capacity in small faith-based and community organizations in these areas increases the likelihood that organizations meet community needs and expand community assets especially for those families and individuals facing the greatest obstacles to economic success.

New Futures for Youth, Inc., a non-profit community intermediary located in Little Rock, was created in 1988 by a broad based community collaborative seeking to improve outcomes for children, youth, and their families and the neighborhoods in which they live. The City of Little Rock's Department of Community Programs was established in 1996 with a mission to address quality of life issues and to provide a greater array of social and human services needed and desired by citizens. For more information about New Futures for Youth visit <http://www.newfuturesforyouth.org>

AOSN Innovations Project Update

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Submitted by: Derick Easter, Innovations Project Coordinator, AOSN

In 2009, The Arkansas Out of School Network (AOSN) received a grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation to increase the capacity of two local communities to develop a common vision, broad community engagement, critical partnerships, and the political will to establish and sustain quality, school-based/school-linked afterschool and summer programs. AOSN is working with these communities to implement best practice tools and strategies for building community partnerships and sustaining collaboration to improve out of school time.

To fulfill this mandate AOSN utilized a community engagement process called "Study Circles". This approach will help to create a sustainable local afterschool initiative by engaging a broad-based grassroots segment of the community in structured discussions about out-of-school time. The process is ideal because in it: everyone is equal, everyone is included, no special experience is needed to participate, each participant has the opportunity to make an impact, and meaningful dialogue can and often does lead to action. Study Circles help people find common ground and build trusting relationships, which are the foundation of building successful collaborative relationships.

We believe that it is imperative that citizens be engaged in discussions of how as a community, they might create a long-term investment in quality afterschool and summer programming that keeps young people safe, supports academic achievement, supports families and helps connect what they are learning to the world of work. Our partner in this initiative was the

Arkansas School Board Association.

For the purpose this article we want to highlight the work that we are doing in Pulaski County with the University of Arkansas Little Rock (UALR), University District Educational Network (UDEN). The University District comprises a 3.5 square mile area and includes neighborhoods in close proximity to UALR.

We began this process with a community organizing and orientation meeting. This initial meeting was open to anyone in the University District ranging from parents, youth, community leaders, teachers, faith based organizations and any interested party. With more than 20 people at this meeting we held discussions about what the project entailed and the following items:

HOPES

What are our hopes for children and youth in out of school time?

BARRIERS

What are the barriers we face in our community?

STRENGTHS

What are our community's strengths?

Based on these discussions they were able to develop the following project goals:

1. To give the community a *leading voice on the issue of out of school time.*
2. To build relationships.
3. To take action to improve opportunities for children and youth when they are not in school.
4. To measure outcomes and celebrate success.

AOSN Innovations Project Update

After this initial discussion we could really begin to see the value of collaboration and community partnerships. It should be noted that this initial step was difficult to get started. The first two meetings that we held were canceled due to poor attendance so we went back to the drawing board, retooled and recruited a little harder and the third time was a winner. Building community partnerships and collaboration is hard work and you have to have the willingness to stay with it despite the initial roadblocks.

The next phase was moving forward to hold our Study Circles (community discussions). We recruited participants based on the following theme:

**Ten hours of your time =
Change for a child's lifetime**

Help us prove this equation true!
Join in a community conversation about learning opportunities children and youth should have outside of school time in Central Little Rock.



We held three group discussions with more than 30 people participating, including youth.

This was a four week discussion about out of school time. Once the discussions were completed the community held a community action forum in order to move from discussion to action. The community action forum gave us an excellent opportunity to hear from each community group and it allowed opportunity for input from community residents or leaders that may not have had an opportunity to attend the community discussion.

At the Action Forum it was determined, by the community, that we need a two-pronged approach, at least for this next quarter of our game plan:

- 1) The TAKING IT TO THE STREETS Campaign
- 2) The MAKING IT S-I-M-P-L-E Campaign



AOSN Innovations Project Update

The ***Taking it to the Streets*** team will focus on reaching out to people where they are and getting more voices involved in this conversation. Specifically, their goal will be to hold more Study Circles or discussion groups over the next few months so that we will be able to deliver a more complete report card and assessment of what we, as a community, think our children and youth need us to be doing. We have found such great value in building collaboration and community partnerships that we feel like we need to hold even more discussions.

The ***Making it S-I-M-P-L-E*** team will focus on making it easier for parents and caregivers to find out about and contact all of the different resources that our community already provides for children and families. Specifically, their goal will be to create a directory of resources that will be both appealing and accessible to families in our neighborhoods. We just completed our most recent event: *The Spring into Action COMMUNITY FORUM* and the “*Keep the COOL in YOU This Summer 2011 COOL AFFAIR*” (Creative, Out-of-the classroom Opportunities for Learning).

We asked people to join us for a discussion about the challenges facing young people today and specific actions we, as a community, can take to help change the odds for our children and youth. Then we held a small street fair to spread the word about “COOL” summer opportunities for children and families.



We have seen through this project that there is great value in building collaboration and community partnerships. In the same spirit of recognizing the value of collaboration and community partnerships, The University of Arkansas Little Rock (UALR) and University District Educational Network (UDEN) is also pleased to announce that we are also a promise neighborhood.

The Central Little Rock Promise Neighborhood (CLRPN) is inspired by the Harlem Children’s Zone. The Harlem Children’s Zone is a community based organization led by Geoffrey Canada that offers education, social services and community building programs to children and families in nearly 100 blocks of Harlem. The Central Little Rock Promise Neighborhood is creating a plan modeled on the principles of the Harlem Children’s Zone that addressed the unique challenges and needs of children and families in central Little Rock.

It is our aim to organize programs and services in targeted areas south of I-630 around the academic and other needs of children and their families to ensure happy, healthy, and productive childhoods and grate academic success from pre-school through college and career training.



Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Campaign

This effort will aim to work with all children in the community and will include schools, afterschool programs, community based services to families, and improved neighborhood conditions such as health and safety. Because of the value of collaboration and building community partnerships the CLRPN is a coalition of partners led by UALR, Arkansas Children's Hospital, Central Arkansas Library System, City of Little Rock, Little Rock School District and New Futures for Youth along with many other community members and partners.

For more information about the Central Little Rock Promise Neighborhood please visit www.littlerockpromise.org or contact Julie Hall at jhall2@ualr.edu or 501-569-3187.

For more information about the Arkansas Out of School Network's Innovations Project and how you can build community partnerships contact Derick Easter at dkeaster@sbcglobal.net.

Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Campaign

Submitted by: Patty Barker, Policy Director, Arkansas Public Policy Panel

Ensuring that all students in Arkansas have equal opportunity for the highest quality education is the best way Arkansans can improve our schools, boost economic opportunity and enhance our children's future.

That's why the Arkansas Public Policy Panel has joined several agency and individual partners

to form the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) campaign which seeks to ensure that every child in Arkansas has access to the essentials of a great education – early childhood education, highly effective teachers, college preparatory classes and equitable education resources. The campaign is a coalition of parents, students, educators, policy makers, philanthropic leaders and community leaders working together to build a stronger movement for expanding education opportunities.

The coalition began with an initial meeting in March of 2010. By November of 2010 more than 200 students, educators and policymakers attended the first Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Summit in Little Rock with a common goal of brainstorming ways to close the achievement gap and improve education in the state. Arkansans from all walks of life came together in a united effort to make a positive change in our state's education future. Grassroots communities across the state organized to address their local challenges and build partnerships with statewide education advocates to seek solutions at the state legislature at the 2011 General Assembly.

A set of priorities was developed by the OTL for the legislative session, with the following results:

- Expand after school and summer programs. SB138 is now Act 166 – Positive Youth Development Act, which will expand more opportunities for afterschool and summer programs.

Geoffrey Canada Speaking Engagement

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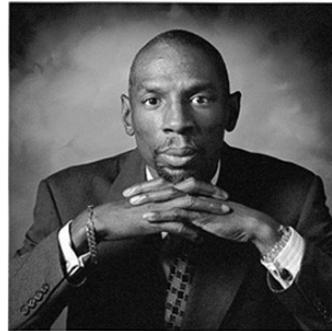
- Improve support for struggling students to reduce need for remediation. HB2032 is now Act 899 – will ensure that there are other criteria, besides test scores, to determine if a student has to take remedial classes at the college level.
- Ensure that funding dedicated to low-income students is spent on effective programs to improve the opportunities to learn for children struggling in school. HB1910 is now Act 1220 – will implement requirements and time limits on the amount of poverty funds that can be carried over and how the funds are allocated.
- Expand quality PreK and early childhood education programs. Unfortunately, no new funding was made available in 2011 due to tight state budget constraints.
- Support measures to ensure that all Arkansas high school graduates have access to college. Successfully opposed HB 1008 which would have required Arkansas students to be legal residents to receive in-state tuition rates at Arkansas colleges.

Member agencies in the OTL campaign include Arkansas Citizens First Congress, the Arkansas Commission on Closing the Achievement Gap, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, the Arkansas Department of Education's ELL Office, Arkansas Education Association, Arkansas Out-of-School Network, Charles A. Frueauff Foundation, Rural Community Alliance, Schott Foundation for Public Education, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University

of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. During the 2011 General Assembly, member groups met regularly to coordinate plans for keeping OTL priority measures moving forward.



Geoffrey Canada Speaking Engagement



Harlem educator and social advocate Geoffrey Canada will make a special presentation at the Statehouse Convention center in Little Rock at 1:00 p.m. on August 11th. Mr. Canada will speak to educators, community leaders, parents, and business leaders on the topic of “Saving the world – One Child at a time.” Following the presentation a book signing will be held.

In conjunction with his presentation a forum will be held that consists of several community groups from across the State. Groups will share information on initiatives they are engaged in to support and enhance the development of children and youth and ways they are engaging parents and their community in a holistic approach from cradle to career.

Geoffrey Canada Speaking Engagement

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The Promise neighborhoods initiatives led by Mr. Canada have proven to be effective ways to assist children who live in socio-economically distressed Harlem have an opportunity to attain a good education and life. Mr. Canada was featured in a documentary entitled "Waiting for Superman" and was the subject of the book "Whatever it Takes". Registration information may be obtained by e-mail at gcanada.lr@gmail.com, contacting Barbara Gilkey at 501.364.3727 or Jamie Morrison at 501.683.0975. The cost is \$25.00 to attend a full day for an individual or \$100.00 for groups consisting of at least five people. The conference is jointly sponsored by the DHS-Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), The Arkansas Department of Education and Arkansas Children's Hospital.

More about the Harlem Zone

Called "one of the most ambitious social-service experiments of our time," by The New York Times, the Harlem Children's Zone Project is a unique, holistic approach to rebuilding a community so that its children can stay on track through college and go on to the job market.

The goal is to create a "tipping point" in the neighborhood so that children are surrounded by an enriching environment of college-oriented peers and supportive adults, a counterweight to "the street" and a toxic popular culture that glorifies misogyny and anti-social behavior.

In January 2007, the HCZ Project launched its Phase 3, expanding its comprehensive system of programs to nearly 100 blocks of Central Harlem. President Barack Obama has called for

the creation of "Promise Neighborhoods" across the country based on the comprehensive, data-driven approach of the HCZ Project. For children to do well, their families have to do well. And for families to do well, their community must do well. That is why HCZ works to strengthen families as well as empowering them to have a positive impact on their children's development. HCZ also works to reweave the social fabric of Harlem, which has been torn apart by crime, drugs and decades of poverty.

The two fundamental principles of The Zone Project are to help kids in a sustained way, starting as early in their lives as possible, and to create a critical mass of adults around them who understand what it takes to help them succeed.

The HCZ Project began as a one-block pilot in the 1990s, then following a 10-year business plan, it expanded to 24 blocks, then 60 blocks, then ultimately 97 blocks.

The budget for the HCZ Project for fiscal year 2010 is over \$48 million, costing an average of \$5,000 per child. Like all HCZ programs, those of the HCZ Project are provided to children and families absolutely free of charge. To learn more about the Harlem Children's Zone visit <http://www.hcz.org>

Information excerpted from <http://www.hcz.org>

Strengthening Arkansas through Philanthropy- Arkansas Community Foundation

Submitted by: Chris Love, Program Director, ARCF

Founded in 1976, Arkansas Community Foundation is Arkansas's only statewide community foundation, and works locally through a network of 27 community-based affiliate offices to gain an in-depth understanding of our state's towns and cities and a statewide perspective on Arkansas's challenges and opportunities. As a foundation that was built by and for the people of Arkansas, we don't work alone. Through the making of gifts and/or the establishing of an endowment through ARCF, we have grown to become an organization made up of a family of philanthropists collectively working together to make our state a better place to live, work and play. Because of our vast network and statewide reach, we have the unique opportunity to hear from local leaders directly on the barrage of issues that their communities face. As we assess what we hear, it becomes increasingly clearer to us that the work of making our communities better is daunting task and one that absolutely cannot be tackled by one organization alone, or by various organizations working in their silos. We are convinced, rather, that in order to really make positive lasting change in our communities, we will have to work collaboratively- this includes all types of organizations from foundations to nonprofits and corporations to public agencies-everyone has a part to play. This is also not just a theory we have

but a fact we have seen proven. In the years we have been in existence we have consistently witnessed the greatest impact being made when organizations have come together around a common mission and have put aside individual agendas to work towards the bigger picture. Whether it has been for a project in the arts, healthcare, education, or youth development, we have witnessed that when organizations and individuals come to the same table with a commitment to work together, great things have happened. It is this type of energy and synergy that it will take to help us move forward, particularly in today's economy and climate where budgets are being cut and organizations have to do more with less. More and more foundations are responding to this by encouraging organizations to collaborate on projects that have the same goal, and in many cases, organizations that are making the case for how they are working together are attracting the attention of funders that have interest in supporting these collaborative efforts. The reality of the day is that we are working in challenging times and our best chance at making positive change and improving our communities for our posterity- whether we are foundation or nonprofit- will be through working together.

For more information about the Arkansas Community Foundation visit <http://www.arcf.org>

