

Dear Friend:

So much has changed in the past 20 years. The personal computer has gone from being a luxury to a necessity. The internet has changed the way we do our jobs, get our information, make new friends and communicate with the world. And it's now impossible to imagine life without cell phones.

But, in the past 20 years, one thing hasn't changed. **The West Virginia KIDS COUNT Fund has remained the state's most trusted source of information about the well-being of children and a leader in the effort to educate parents, policymakers and the public about what young children need to thrive and achieve.**

In 2010, KIDS COUNT will launch a year-long celebration of our 20th anniversary, and this important milestone would not have been possible without the loyal support of friends

like you. Thank you! I hope you will continue to support KIDS COUNT's work to champion the needs of West Virginia's youngest children.

In this year's annual report, we take a look back at KIDS COUNT's major successes during our first 20 years and a look forward at the exciting work we have planned for 2010. I am proud to say that KIDS COUNT is 20 years old and still counting. **We are successfully championing the needs of West Virginia's youngest children because we have the loyal support of friends like you.** I hope we can continue to count on your support in 2010 and beyond!



Sincerely yours,
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Margie Hale
Executive Director

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2009 WEST VIRGINIA KIDS COUNT FUND ANNUAL REPORT



20 years and still counting...





1990
KIDS COUNT's Birthday



1992
The Day One Project



1992
The KIDS COUNT Data Book



2004
The Building Blocks of Learning



2006
The Policy Matters Project



2007
Every day, Every Way!



2008
The Kids First Communities Campaign:



2009
Business on Board with Childcare!



KIDS COUNT's 2010 Plan of Action

1992 - The Day One Project

Day One is a proven national program that teaches brand new parents about the importance of brain development. **KIDS COUNT launched the program in West Virginia in 1992, and, under our direction, it eventually grew to include nearly all of the hospitals that delivered babies in the state.** The program clearly demonstrated that the brain development information we shared with parents significantly changed their behavior in a positive way. Day One is still successfully operating but is now administered by the West Virginia Hospital Association.

1992 - The KIDS COUNT Data Book

The first KIDS COUNT Data Book was published in 1992 and quickly became **the most respected source of data and analysis about the plight of West Virginia's children.** The book tracks key indicators of the health, education, safety and security, and economic conditions of children both on a statewide and

county-by-county basis. It is often the basis of public policy decisions and an indispensable resource for those who seek and award funding in West Virginia.

2004 - The Building Blocks of Learning

In 2004, KIDS COUNT studied how young children learn to read and identified national and state models for early literacy. The results of our research were published in a groundbreaking report: ***The Building Blocks of Literacy: How We Lay the Foundation for Literacy and Why It Is Important to West Virginia.***

2006 - The Policy Matters Project

In 2006, KIDS COUNT led an effort to document the state's existing early child development (ECD) policies and determine the best ways to improve the quality and accountability of West Virginia's ECD system. **A childcare quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) was one of the top policy**

priorities identified in the Policy Matters process and the driving force behind our successful Kids First Communities Campaign.

2007 - Every day, Every Way!

In 2007, KIDS COUNT launched the *Every day, Every way!* project, a toolkit for parents and childcare providers reminding them to incorporate early literacy concepts into their everyday routines. **The project demonstrated significant gains in the amount of time parents and childcare providers spent reading to, rhyming with and asking questions of young children and positive shifts in attitudes about the kinds of activities that can help lay the foundation for reading.**

2008 - The Kids First Communities Campaign

In 2008, KIDS COUNT launched a year-long effort, called the Kids First Communities campaign, to advocate for a QRIS in

West Virginia. The grassroots campaign resulted in more than 2,000 parents and childcare providers joining the KIDS COUNT e-mail Action Alert system; the endorsement of over 100 community leaders and organizations; dozens of meetings with legislators; a highly-successful "Take a Flower to Childcare Day" celebration; a letter-writing campaign that resulted in more than 300 postcards to the governor; a successful legislative reception; and, **most importantly, legislation launching West Virginia's first childcare quality rating and improvement system by 2011.**

2009 - Business on Board with Childcare!

In June, we launched our newest project, an annual, statewide award program, called *Business on Board with Childcare!*, that recognizes businesses that support their employees' childcare needs. In the program's very first year, **70 West Virginia businesses qualified for the *Business on Board with Childcare!* award, far exceeding our expectations for the project.**



- Officially celebrate our 20th anniversary in February of 2010 by honoring all of the *Business on Board with Childcare!* award winners and giving special recognition to the businesses that have gone well beyond the minimum award criteria.
- Expand the focus of the *Business on Board with Childcare!* project to include educating all West Virginia businesses about the importance and value of childcare-friendly workplace policies.
- Continue to lead *Take a Flower to Childcare Day*, our statewide celebration of the great work childcare providers do to support West Virginia's families and contribute to the state's economic prosperity.

- Publish the 2009 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* and the 2009 *Data Book Essay*, "The Kids First Communities Campaign: A Playbook for Early Child Development Policy Change," a detailed case study of KIDS COUNT's recent grassroots campaign for a childcare quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).
- Advocate for the funding necessary to implement the childcare quality rating and improvement system we fought so hard to earn during last year's legislative session.

