



**Our mission is to work in homes and communities to:**

Help families succeed • Coach child care teachers so children excel in school • Partner with teens to prevent pregnancy, school drop-out, drug use and suicide

# Addressing Childhood Poverty

Today, one in three children in Southern Arizona lives in poverty, up (or is it down—frighteningly down) from last year's one in four. The impacts of poverty are insidious and multi-faceted for children, and families. This newsletter highlights solutions and antidotes to poverty. Child and Family Resources is one Arizona's leading prevention and early intervention organizations and our vision of helping families succeed, ensuring children are ready for school, and partnering with at-risk teens to prevent pregnancy, suicide and drug/alcohol abuse leads us to provide programs and services that also significantly address risk factors for poverty.

Home visitation programs like Healthy Families prevent child abuse and ensure healthy child development, while giving parents skill, confidence and education. When children enter school ready to learn, the downstream impacts reduce poverty: increased high school graduation rates, decreased juvenile crime, less substance use. When Child and Family Resources' coaches help improve the quality of early childhood education, more preschoolers end up better prepared to start Kindergarten at grade level. When teens learn leadership skills and join together to address problems like drug use, bullying or suicide on their high school campuses, the goal of our Youth Empowered for Success program,

we also directly address risk factors for poverty in the next generation.

As you read about the graduates of our programs in this newsletter, I hope you will reflect on their accomplishments and feel pride and admiration for the clients of CFR who cope with much adversity and overcome so many challenges. Great things start small. Thank you for your ongoing support of our important work.

Eric Schindler  
President & CEO

## Healthy Families Graduate

This summer, Healthy Families held a graduation for 30 families whose children will be entering kindergarten this fall. Healthy Families, a program of Child and Family Resources, provides knowledge, resources, and a support network to strengthen family relationships.

Participation in the program may start during pregnancy, yet all families are enrolled after delivery, or prior to three months of birth. Parents learn about healthy child development and age appropriate expectations. Workshops and in-home visits encourage healthy attitudes and positive parenting techniques.

“As a young mother at the age of 21, my boyfriend and I had no experience raising a child. I was a stay at home mom with no family support. I was referred to the Healthy Families Program and our Family Specialist, Jennifer, has helped our family emotionally with the information she shared on activities to do with the baby or how to move beyond my depression. She has helped our family grow into what we are today, a strong, happy family with a healthy two year old.”



# Teen Moms Graduate with GEDs

In February 2013, 15 adolescent moms graduated with their GED's at the Maricopa Center for Adolescent Parents (MCAP), a program of Child & Family Resources. Currently there are 20 students studying for their GEDs, learning how to make good decisions, set goals and become self sufficient.

Alejandra's story, right, chronicles one student's challenge as she makes choices for herself, her child and her future. She is just one example of the incredible strides young women are making towards independence at Maricopa Center for Adolescent Parents.

"I don't see why you need to get a GED, Allie. I make enough money to take care of us. Don't you trust me?" Miguel gazed into Alejandra's eyes, working his usual charm. She felt herself falling for it, as usual. She always did.

"This isn't about you," Alejandra said, turning from his gaze. "This is about me. And Corey. It's about us."

Miguel sneered and leaped off the couch. Alejandra pursued him.

"This is about me finishing school and being able to do something for me and

my boy," she said. "I need to do this. If I can just get the GED, then I can get a better job, and maybe go to Phoenix College like some —"

**"I don't see why you need to get a GED"**

Miguel spun suddenly, his nose inches from hers.

"Allie, don't choose that school over me. I need you, and that stupid school is taking you away from me."

"But Miguel—"

Miguel let his teenage temper flare. "Stay home today, Allie, stay home every day. Stay with me . . . if you know what's good for you."

Four hours before, in her classroom at the Maricopa Center for Adolescent Parents, Alejandra had been flush with success—victory, even. It began when she appeared at Joy's office door several weeks ago and quietly announced, "Mrs. Bunney says I'm ready to take my Social Studies test."

"Great," Joy said. She glanced at her calendar. "Wow that was fast, Alejandra. You've only been here three weeks!"

"I know," Alejandra said, twisting her fingers in front of her. It was a nervous habit she had when talking to anyone in authority—especially teachers! Now MCAP offered her a path to a life neither her own mother or grandmother had ever known. Two days later, she was back in Joy's office with her scores. "I've never passed anything before," she whispered, still trying to grasp her success.

"How does it feel?" Joy asked.

"It's pretty cool!" she said, and smiled.

All of the GED students celebrated Alejandra's success that day during their

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## Champions for Children 2013 Awardees

During April, Child Abuse Prevention Month, Child & Family Resources honors community members who are making a difference in the lives of children. In 2013, our winners included:

### Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

John Dunshee, Tucson/Sunshine Kiwanis

### Champions for Children & Families Award Winners

Annabel Ratley, Easter Seals Blake Foundation

Dana Wolfe Naimark, Children's Action Alliance

Kim Metz, The Parent Connection

Robert Heslinga, Aviva Children's Services  
Southwest Institute for Research for Women

Susie Huhn, Casa De Los Niños

### Gabe Zimmerman Emerging Champion Award Winner

Naomi Jonason, Foster Mom  
Jason Wilhelmsen & Meghan Wightman,  
Tucson Police Department

### Making Children's Lives Better Award Winner

Ben Buehler-Garcia, Volunteer

### "CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES" NOMINATIONS

If you know of someone who is a champion of children, please consider nominating them for a Champions award to be honored at the April 2014 Brunch.

Nominations begin in December at [www.childfamilyresources.org/champions](http://www.childfamilyresources.org/champions). Please consider your colleagues, your neighbors, community leaders, and others who are making children's lives better.

## Youth Empowered for Success

**Y**outh Empowered for Success, YES, is a program of Child and Family Resources and a Pima County initiative that mobilizes the power of youth to create conditions for success in themselves, schools and communities. YES involves teams from area high schools in leadership efforts that benefit schools and neighborhoods by raising youth voices in messages about community, healthy living, achievement and striving for an alcohol and drug free teen life.

This past summer, YES held its 10th Teen Institute with 90 youth from nine different schools who gathered for six days at the University of Arizona. The Institute topics included: resiliency, leadership, decision making, avoiding peer pressure, and

breaking down social and racial barriers, self efficacy (belief in self), community participation; and the risks and harm of alcohol and drugs on youth.

Teams of youth returned to their schools this fall to put their new knowledge and skills into practice by working to increase the sense of connectedness among students and staff at their schools and to integrate a youth voice into the school's community efforts.

This program is funded by the Community Partnership of Southern Arizona under a grant from the Arizona Department of Health Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

### TEEN INSTITUTE

**72** youth in  
**10** teams from  
**9** high schools &  
**1** junior high  
**8** adults working with  
**18** youth  
mentors for  
**14** hours a day for  
**6** days

### Teams from:

**Canyon Del Oro,  
Cienega, Desert View,  
Marana, Palo Verde,  
Pueblo, Sunnyside,  
Tohono O'odham high  
schools and Apollo  
middle school**



## A child is learning every waking moment

**T**wo out of three Arizona children don't attend preschool, 27 percent live in poverty and three-quarters of fourth-graders aren't proficient in reading, according to the annual Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Data Book.

For the second straight year, the state scored second-to-last in the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds who attend preschool, which research shows leads to success later in life. Nationally, nearly

half of preschool-age children are in some sort of childcare program.

Research on low-income children who attend quality early-education programs shows that, compared with their peers, they are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college and be employed. The research also shows that they are less likely to be on welfare or get into trouble with the law. The economic payoff, according to some studies, is as

high as \$7 for every \$1 invested in quality preschool.

"People think about day care as just someplace where a child goes. They don't understand that a child is learning every waking moment and that the quality of those experiences affects their development," said Bruce Liggett, executive director of the Arizona Child Care Association.

### Teen Moms Graduate

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weekly community lunch. The applause made Alejandra blush. All of her fellow students were used to bad news when it came to tests at school; they, like Alejandra, had dropped out after becoming pregnant teenagers.

Alejandra found she enjoyed her school days at the center. From studying for GED exams to learning Life Skills and attending parenting classes while her son was down the hall in the Early Learning Center; she'd come to look forward to each day's activities. She felt proud of her accomplishments, a foreign feeling, and one she would like to feel again.

Over the following five weeks, the students celebrated with Alejandra again for passing her Science and Reading GED tests. Two tests left.

### MCAP offered her a path to a life neither her own mother or grandmother had ever known

Allie was glad for the phone call interrupting Miguel's rant.

"Hi, Alejandra, it's Joy. We haven't seen you in a couple of weeks. We miss you. What's going on?"

"I've just been . . . dealing with some family issues," Alejandra said.

### She felt proud of her accomplishments, a foreign feeling, and one she would like to feel again

"Is everything okay?" Joy asked. "I can hear Corey crying."

Miguel smirked and walked outside to smoke; clearly thinking he'd made his point. Alejandra lowered her voice.

"My boyfriend and I are fighting," she told Joy. "He thinks I'm spending too much time away from him. He won't give me a ride anymore. I'm not sure what to do."

"Well, we have bus passes so you and Corey can get to school every day," Joy said. "But you have to decide how important this is to you. I need you here first thing tomorrow to hold your spot in the program. Okay?"

"Okay," Alejandra said. "I'll call you back."

"Anytime," Joy said. "Keep me posted."

When her boyfriend returned, Alejandra faced him.

"Miguel, I need to go to school," she said. "Joy will give me a bus pass, but only if I show up tomorrow. I have two tests to go. I'm almost there . . ."

"You don't need a GED, Allie," Miguel said.

"I know what's good for me," Alejandra said. "That's why I'm going."

Miguel's eyes narrowed. "I will make your life miserable, Allie. Without me, you won't have a ride. You won't have a place to live. Your son won't have a dad to stand in for that bastard who got you pregnant. You will have nothing."

Alejandra bit her lip, her eyes down. She summoned the courage of the other girls in her class. They wouldn't take this.

She took a deep breath and met Miguel's gaze.

"You can say and do whatever you want. I am going to school tomorrow and I am going to finish my GED. You can't stop me, and if you won't support me . . . get out. I'm going to be a nurse whether you like it or not."

That's when she noticed that Corey had stopped crying.



Joy Leveen, Program Director of the Maricopa Center for Adolescent Parents and the Teen Parent Support Program in Phoenix, will be presenting

this story at the national conference of the Alliance for Children and Families in Minneapolis, MN this fall. The story was selected as one of three finalists in a nationwide competition to showcase how Alliance organizations are decreasing the number of people in poverty and increasing the number of people on the road to economic empowerment.

## What It Means to Be a Youth Mentor

“Being a Youth Mentor means the world to me! I have grown as a person and as a leader. I use what I learn to show others the importance of making the right decisions for one’s own well-being. It is amazing to me to meet the youth at Teen Institute and see them grow as individuals and leaders. By becoming a Youth Mentor, I have influenced the direction and decisions that they make. It is important to believe in youth and always support them because they can all be successful. I always do my best to be a good role model.”

—Andrea Vazquez, Youth Mentor

“Having the opportunity to be a youth mentor myself is such an honor; I thank Cathey and Diana along with all the other peer mentors for giving me the opportunity to experience it all. Each year we spend just about every Saturday together planning one of the best weeks of that year, Teen Institute. Being a part of this program has taught me a lot of new things and has provided me with a second family. The other youth mentors are like my brothers and sisters and I cherish them all. So being a Youth Mentor to me is being a positive change, a helping hand, a facilitator, an inspirational leader, and most importantly a family.”

—Brandon Bautista, Youth Mentor

“Being a Youth Mentor is an almost indescribable privilege. It requires a lot of hard work, dedication and trust. To me, being honored with this title means I have a little more responsibility than the average youth. I was selected by an adult as someone with potential to do something incredible in this world—which to me is a very big deal. I love the feeling of importance and meaning, but most of all I love the feeling of being able to trust and confide in adults and youth - at the same time. It’s not very often that youth can open up to adults and have true relationships; but as a Youth Mentor, I get to experience that feeling all the time.”

—Becka Buck, Youth Mentor



## Please designate Child & Family Resources for the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit

The Arizona Charitable Tax Credit program allows you to receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on your Arizona state income tax when you give to a qualifying charitable organization. For those filing a single tax return, your tax credit can be up to \$200; for those filing jointly, it’s up to \$400. This means that the money you would otherwise pay in taxes can benefit Child & Family Resources! And remember . . . you can make this donation in addition to the Arizona School Tax Credit!

Here’s what to do:

- 1) Prepare your state tax return—you must itemize!
- 2) Complete Arizona Tax Form 321 and include it with your state return.
- 3) Giving *and* receiving is easier than ever.

It’s that easy to decide where your tax dollars are spent!

It’s better to give AND receive: Give to Child & Family Resources; receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit; benefit the entire community.

Go to [www.childfamilyresources.org](http://www.childfamilyresources.org) to make a secure online donation.  
Tax ID# 86-0251984



## Join Child and Family Resources Support Group

Your donation will have a direct impact on a child. With your help, Child & Family Resources will continue its services to ensure healthy and safe families for Arizona children.

- Give monthly through our Circle of Giving
- Join us on **November 2** for Lobster Landing
- Designate your end of the year “working poor tax credit” to Child & Family Resources
- Sponsor an adolescent mom in getting her GED
- Remember Child & Family Resources in your will

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to call Kate Hiller, VP of Development, at 520-321-3778 for Tucson/ statewide questions or Melissa Blatt, Development Officer, in our Phoenix office at 602-688-5506. You can also make a donation online at <http://childfamilyresources.org>



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LARGEST CRUSTACEAN CELEBRATION**

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