

# Conference Background

*Wendy Lazarus is a Founder and Director of The Children's Partnership, a national policy and strategy center whose mission is to incubate new tools to strengthen the children's movement in America. Ms. Lazarus has spent nearly twenty-five years working on the front lines as a children's advocate — in California, Ohio, Colorado, and Washington, D.C. — to secure improved health care, child support, and other needed services for children and families. Ms. Lazarus began her career at The Children's Defense Fund where she served as the organization's first Director of Health, then as Director of Health and Special Projects in the Fund's Ohio office. Between 1989 and 1993, Ms. Lazarus served as founding Vice President for Policy for Children Now, a California-based policy and advocacy organization, where she developed the organization's action agenda and spearheaded its legislative activities. She has authored more than twenty reports and articles on a wide range of children's issues and serves as a board member or advisor to national, state, and community-based organizations and companies. Ms. Lazarus has also served as a consultant to grant-making foundations including the Conrad Hilton Foundation and the Piton Foundation. She received her B.A. from Yale University's first class of women graduates, and received her M.A. in Public Health from the University of North Carolina.*

*Laurie Lipper, a Founder and Director of The Children's Partnership, has more than fifteen years experience in applying communications strategies to advocate for social issues. In October 1993, she and Wendy Lazarus founded The Children's Partnership, a nonprofit, nonpartisan strategy and policy center on children's issues. Ms. Lipper co-authored the report, "America's Children and the Information Superhighway," as well as "The Contract with America: Its Impact on Children." Ms. Lipper also served as founding Vice President for Communications at Children Now, a California-based children's advocacy organization fostering public policy and community action campaigns such as the one that led to an expansion of health care services to 630,000 youngsters in the state. She was responsible for the direct marketing and related corporate sponsors of Hands Across America in the fall of 1985. Prior to that, as the Executive Director of The Nation Institute, an independent public charity in New York City, she oversaw research, conferences, seminars, publishing ventures, educational programs, and public debates on issues related to media, foreign and domestic policy, and the First Amendment. Ms. Lipper received her B.A. from the University of California.*

**"At a recent board meeting of youth issues, a presenter talked about how parents are spending less time with their kids. She noted the growing wage differential between men and women, and the rise of single-parent households and women holding two jobs. My colleagues turned to each other and said, 'Maybe we should have a women's self-sufficiency program instead.'"**

—MARCIA FESTEN

Program Officer, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

*This memo lays out the background for and goals of "Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies."*

February 2, 1996

TO: Wingspread Conference Participants  
FR: Laurie Lipper and Wendy Lazarus  
RE: Building a Constituency for Children:  
Community and National Strategies —  
The Wingspread Conference

*Why isn't there a popular movement for children?*

*Why aren't parents in the vanguard of such a movement?*

*Why are children our poorest citizens?*

*Why have so many of the institutions children depend upon been allowed to erode, lacking both funding and public interest?*

*How can local efforts connect into a national movement?*

*How do individual values and personal responsibility fit with community action?*

*Can we build a powerful constituency for kids?*

Leaders for children in local communities as well as in national institutions across the country are asking these questions. Major shifts in the policy environment — such as the challenge to many of the fundamental safety net programs for children, the erosion of public resources, a lack of popular trust in public institutions, and the emergence of a conservative family movement — have all added an urgency to the need for a strategic review. Leaders are also recognizing the need for longer-term strategies, as well as strategies that incorporate civic involvement.

**"Our hope is that a key outcome of Wingspread will be the recognition that we need two parallel tracks for kids: one, to move swiftly with all resources at our command now; and two, a long-term, deeply researched strategy that deliberately builds a new popular base for children.**

—LAURIE LIPPER

Co-Director, The Children's Partnership

The well-being of any nation's children depends upon a culture that values them. Yet, by many important measures, America's children are not faring well — and the nation has not vigorously responded to their cause. Just as industry periodically reviews its position and strategies against bottom-line goals, so the children's field can benefit from a strategic review that can lead to more powerful directions for the future.

At Wingspread, a small group of individuals from different backgrounds will come together to begin a discussion about how to articulate and advance a children's agenda in this changing climate. While children's leaders have different views about strategy, one important area of common ground has emerged — the need to build a broader public constituency for children. This memo reviews how the Wingspread Conference, "Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies," came to be and sets out the overall approach and goals for the Conference.

### Background

In 1993, at its inception, The Children's Partnership began to look at "core questions" facing the children's movement — particularly why there was not a broad popular constituency for children. At the same time, Janice Kreamer and the Board of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and Related Trusts recognized that "what we need is a movement for children," echoing the same conclusion that leaders and advocates for children across the country had reached.

Together, Janice Kreamer, Marvin Cohen, and Cindy Ballard (at The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth), The Children's Partnership, and Dr.

Raphael Sonenshein (Professor of Political Science at California State University at Fullerton) began to think about how we might shape these concerns into action, focusing on both national and local strategies. The Partnership and Dr. Sonenshein developed a speech and briefing sheet entitled "Ten Essential Elements of an American Social Movement." The speech, given

***"The children's movement cannot win if we continue to compartmentalize our efforts. I work with the Sierra Club and National Education Association and hear the same from them. If we don't integrate into the broader mainstream, we'll all be in the same sinking boat together."***

—MICHAEL HUDSON

*Political Consultant, Mainstream America*

by Dr. Sonenshein at a Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth conference, caught the attention of The Johnson Foundation. And they, quite generously, offered the Wingspread facilities as a place to begin a conversation about long-term and next-generation strategies for children. The Packard Foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Ford Foundation joined as funding partners to support the conference.

In pursuing this program, we have discovered a vigorous interest from many different people who work on children's and family issues in understanding more about how to link their concerns and work for children to a broader public. There is also a growing recognition that without the power of a popular movement, the goal of institutionalizing an adequate social policy umbrella for children will be extremely difficult to achieve.

### The Starting Line

Although we have structured this conference to focus on long-term strategies, we are exceedingly mindful of the current crisis in children's social policy. Community leaders, children's advocates, policymakers and others are fighting a heroic and historic battle to maintain hard-won gains for children. Their vision, leadership, and unyielding determination in building a "children's cause" over the past twenty-five years — and today — is the bedrock from which we begin this discussion.

We also recognize that over the past decade, the circle of those aware of and committed to improving conditions for children has grown significantly. In communities, neighborhoods, and states, an armada of organizations and individuals is working independently for children. Other positive trends in the field include

***"We need to clearly define why the system is failing kids today, why kids are on the streets, why they don't have the education and health care they need. And when we're presenting these failures to the public, the solution has to be obvious."***

—JUDITH Y. WHANG

*Program Officer, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

the growing involvement of community foundations, a new tide of advocacy groups, new national coalitions, and recognition by mainstream civic groups and the business community of the urgency of children's needs.

### Approach

The approach we will take in this Conference is to step back from our daily involvement in children's issues and view our work in its broader historical, political, cultural, and demographic context. Our goal is to clearly identify the next big hurdles in furthering a children's agenda and begin to shape long-term strategies to overcome them. The strategies developed will be rooted in and drawn from the many successes of leaders across the country in promoting children's interests — in local communities, states, and on the national level. However, there is recognition that a children's agenda must connect with a broader public, like the environmental or seniors movements have done.

### Conference Goals

1. Open a dialogue about long-term and innovative strategies for children;
2. Provide a briefing about the broader context in which we work — focusing especially on what can be learned from the history of successful social movements and from public opinion research;
3. Examine the barriers to and potential of building a more powerful constituency for children;

Henry Thomas,  
Carol Larson

4. Examine how local efforts and leadership can foster a children's movement in communities and beyond; and
5. Develop sound ideas for moving forward.

### Hoped-for Outcomes

1. Begin to form a "Brain Trust" to connect different elements of the children's movement and to look for common ground;
2. Understand the different perspectives about the barriers to advancing a children's agenda;
3. Lay the foundation for long-term strategic planning to advance and secure a social policy agenda for children; and
4. Determine next steps for local and national movement building.

### Context

The conference "Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies" is part of a larger program entitled Next-Generation Strategies to Build the American Children's Movement. This program is designed as a multi-year research, convening, and publishing program whose mission is:

*To provide a broad range of community leaders, activists, foundations, and concerned citizens with timely and innovative tools to design effective long- and short-term strategies to advance and sustain a children's social agenda.*



## Conference Participants

### *Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies*

#### **Cindy Sesler Ballard**

Director • The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth

#### **Peter L. Benson**

President • Search Institute

#### **Barbara B. Blum**

President • Foundation for Child Development

#### **Charles W. Bray**

President • The Johnson Foundation

#### **Marvin R. Cohen**

Director • Children, Youth and Families Initiative  
Chicago Community Trust

#### **John D. Deardourff**

President • Deardourff/The Media Company

#### **Charles Deutsch**

Director • Harvard School Health Project  
Harvard School of Health  
Senior Program Associate • Harvard Project on  
Schooling and Children

#### **Marcia Festen**

Program Officer • Community Initiatives Program  
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

#### **John W. Gardner**

Professor • Graduate School of Business  
Stanford University

#### **James O. Gibson**

Senior Associate • The Urban Institute

#### **Michael Hudson**

Political Consultant • Mainstream America

#### **Sandra Brock Jibrell**

Associate Director • Annie E. Casey Foundation

#### **Richard Kinch**

Senior Program Officer • The Johnson Foundation

#### **Patricia Konley**

The Children's Partnership Writer

#### **Janice C. Kreamer**

President • Greater Kansas City Community Foundation  
& Affiliated Trusts

#### **Celinda Lake**

President • Lake Research, Inc.

#### **Carol S. Larson**

Director of Foundation Programs • The David and Lucile  
Packard Foundation

#### **Wendy Lazarus**

Director • The Children's Partnership

#### **Laurie Lipper**

Director • The Children's Partnership

#### **Robert F. Long**

Program Director • Philanthropy and Volunteerism  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

#### **John L. McKnight**

Director of Community Studies • Center for Urban Affairs  
and Policy Research  
Northwestern University

#### **Richard Murphy**

Vice President • Academy for Educational Development  
Director • Center for Youth Development and Policy  
Research

#### **Carolyn Reid-Green**

President and Chief Executive Officer • Drew Child  
Development Corporation

#### **Elizabeth Schroyer**

President • Schroyer and Associates, Inc.

#### **Theda Skocpol**

Professor of Sociology and Government • Harvard  
University

#### **Raphael J. Sonenshein**

Professor • Department of Political Science  
California State University at Fullerton

#### **Henry M. Thomas III**

Vice President for Youth Development • National Urban  
League, Inc.

#### **Judith Y. Whang**

Program Officer • The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## Wingspread Conference Reader Contents

### *Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies*

As part of the planning and preparation for the conference, The Children's Partnership compiled a reader for participants. The contents included articles (both academic and popular press) that helped create the spirit and map the substance of the conference discussion. Copies of the reader can be ordered from The Children's Partnership for a nominal fee.

### Reader Contents

1. "Social Movements for Children," Martha Minow and Richard Weissbourd, *Daedalus*, Winter 1993.
2. "Conservatives Lobby for Parental Rights," Mike Allen, *The New York Times*, 1/15/96.
3. "Join a Bowling League, Save the Nation," Tom Plate, *The Los Angeles Times*.
4. "American Social Policies: Future Possibilities in Historical Perspective," Theda Skocpol, *Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Social Perspective*, 1995.
5. "Remaking U.S. Social Policies for the 21st Century," Theda Skocpol, *Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Social Perspective*, 1995.
6. "Talking About Children: A Focus Group Report from Public Agenda," John Immerwahr with the assistance of Janice Kamrin, *Public Agenda*, 1995.
7. "Say No to This Welfare 'Reform'," Marian Wright Edelman, *The Washington Post*, 11/3/95.
8. "Next-Generation Strategies for an American Children's Movement," Wendy Lazarus and Laurie Lipper, *The Children's Partnership*, 11/27/95.

# About the Sponsors

## **About The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth**

The Coalition's mission is to strengthen the capability of community foundations and their partners to raise community awareness of children's needs and to develop greater advocacy on their behalf. Its activities increase the effectiveness of existing voices, while adding new ones such as business, neighborhood leaders, and the general public.

The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth has local partnerships in communities across the nation. The Coalition offers technical assistance and capacity-building resources to its members to help these local partnerships move along a continuum from conceptualization to implementation of a community action plan to realization of improved conditions for children and their families.

## **About The Johnson Foundation**

The Johnson Foundation is an exempt operating foundation that uses its resources to support action-oriented conferences on issues of public interest at Wingspread, a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed facility. The Foundation's mission is to help ideas have consequences on behalf of the common good, in the case of the conference reported on in this document, on behalf of children and youth.

## **About The Children's Partnership**

The Children's Partnership is a national non-profit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to inform leaders and the public about the needs of America's seventy million children, and to engage them in ways that benefit children. The Partnership undertakes research and policy analysis, publishes reports and materials, develops multimedia campaigns, and forges new alliances among parents, policymakers, and the private sector to achieve tangible gains for children.

The Partnership focuses particular attention on identifying new trends and emerging issues that will affect large numbers of America's children and on providing early analysis and strategies for action. In this way, it functions as a research and development (R&D) arm for the children's movement.

The Children's Partnership's work is supported by private foundations, corporations, the entertainment community, interested individuals, and others with whom it partners on projects, including the AT&T Foundation, the California Community Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Joseph Drown Foundation, the Favrot Fund, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Pacific Bell, and the Streisand Foundation. The Children's Partnership has offices in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

## **Current Programs**

**America's Children and the Information Superhighway:** A multi-year project exploring how the information superhighway and related technologies can best serve children.

**Next Generation Strategies to Build the American Children's Movement:** A multi-year program designed to provide community leaders, activists, foundations, and concerned citizens with innovative tools to advance and sustain a children's agenda.

**Children and Health Care Reform:** A multi-year project to monitor changes in health policy and identify openings to improve health insurance coverage of and services for children.

## **Publishing Ventures**

**The Children's Information Service:** A national information service for the media, which provides timely bulletins about children's issues and stories, as well as frames news and events from the perspective of their effect on children.

**Strategic Audits:** The Children's Partnership researches and writes strategic analyses on selected issues. For example, the Partnership has published "Community Organizing and Advancing a Children's Agenda," in conjunction with The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth.



**The Children's Partnership**

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The Children's Partnership

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