

**B U I L D I N G A
C O N S T I T U E N C Y
F O R C H I L D R E N**

*Community
and National
Strategies*



**W I N G S P R E A D C O N F E R E N C E
S U M M A R Y & H I G H L I G H T S**


February 8-10, 1996 Racine, Wisconsin

A PUBLICATION OF THE CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP



Statement of Purpose

***To identify
next-generation
strategies to
help build the
American children's
movement.***



Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies

Wingspread Conference Summary & Highlights

February 8-10, 1996

Racine, Wisconsin

sponsored by

The Children's Partnership

The Coalition of Community
Foundations for Youth

The Johnson Foundation

with support from

The Ford Foundation

Foundation for Child Development

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The David and Lucile
Packard Foundation

Foreword

In an undeniably changed economic and political environment, those working to further a social agenda for children and families are exploring new strategies.

For example, more than 200,000 people rallied in Washington on June 1, 1996, to "Stand for Children." They were moms, dads, grandparents, pediatricians, lawyers, teachers, and community volunteers of every race and nationality. Many had traveled thousands of miles to voice their concern about America's kids at what is believed to be the largest demonstration on behalf of children ever held in this nation.

Just a few months earlier, in the chill winds of February, more than two dozen leaders for children and youth, philanthropic representatives, and others who work to change social policy convened on this same subject at the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread Conference Center on the lower lip of Lake Michigan in Racine, Wisconsin. The conference was called "Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies." For nearly three days, participants looked at history, successful social movements, and new snapshots from leading pollsters on what voters want and what legislators hear. This report presents the highlights of those discussions.

This material is designed to expand the knowledge and intellectual base and lead directly to practical new strategies for America's families and communities. We hope this information will provide useful tactical information and help unite those working for families and children.



Front row, seated, left to right: Kory Schaff, Carolyn Reid-Green, John Deardourff, John Gardner, Raphael Sonenshein; middle row, left to right, Marvin Cohen, Michelle St. Clair, Robert Long, Charles Deutsch, Michelle Merkel, Barbara Blum, Laurie Lipper, Richard Murphy, John McKnight, Elizabeth Schroyer, Theda Skocpol, James Gibson; back row, left to right, Janice Kreamer, Peter Benson, Carol Larson, Wendy Lazarus, Sandra Brock Jibrell, Cindy Sesler Ballard, Judy Whang, Michale Hudson. Not pictured, Marcia Festen, Celine Lake, Patricia Konley, Henry Thomas.

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Introduction

"We have not in some years had so rich and powerful and sophisticated a discussion of an important national issue as your conference produced."

Charles Bray
President, The Johnson Foundation

An Extraordinary Gathering

From February 8 to February 10, 1996, an extraordinary gathering occurred at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin. Individuals from a wide range of backgrounds concerned with family and community convened to participate in the discussion, "Building a Constituency for Children: Community and National Strategies."

The Conference was co-sponsored by The Children's Partnership, in association with Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Professor of Political Science at California State University at Fullerton, The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth, and The Johnson Foundation.

The funders included the Ford, Kellogg, and Packard Foundations and the Foundation for Child Development.

The participants (listed on page 24)

came from different "disciplines" — from local community organizing and action to national institutions and from politics to communications to academia. Each put aside for three days his/her own organization and agenda. They came because each recognized the need to connect more effectively with the American public in order to transform conditions for America's children, families, and communities.

"We're talking about something at this conference that feels very fresh and important. If we can widen the circle of people involved, this meeting can be the beginning of something of real value to children and their families."

—CAROL S. LARSON
Director of Foundation Programs,
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

The Program

The program at Wingspread was designed by The Children's Partnership. Our goal was to provide a new framework to look at building public support for a child and family agenda. We took a long-term view of strategies, but one that built upon what had already been achieved. We concentrated on how significant social and cultural changes have happened in the past, and what lessons can be applied to drafting strategies for today. We also attempted to mix provocative presentations with a great deal of time for discussion.

The presentations of the speakers and comments of the participants form most of the text of this report, and we found them informative and challenging. We have excerpted key points from the speeches without attempting to edit them or make transitions between points. These ideas are those of the presenters and are not necessarily endorsed by the co-sponsors, funders, or other participants.

The Presentations

- **Ten Essential Elements in an American Social Movement:** Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Professor of Political Science, California State University at Fullerton.
- **A Children's Movement and the Broader History of American Social Movements:** Dr. Theda Skocpol, Professor, Department of Government and Sociology, Harvard University.
- **Public Opinion: A Dynamic Political Context for Building a Constituency for Children's Issues:** John Deardourff, President, Deardourff/The Media Company, and Celinda Lake, President, Lake Research, Inc.
- **Building a Strong Constituency for Children:** Elizabeth Schray, President, Schray and Associates, Inc.
- **Where Do We Go From Here? Next Steps:** Wendy Lazarus, Laurie Lipper, Directors, The Children's Partnership, and Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Professor of Political Science, California State University at Fullerton.

The Discussions

The conference moved from the political to the historical to the tactical. There was ample discussion of roadblocks and caveats about past and future efforts. There was also agreement to defer some hard questions in the interest of exploring the answer to the question: How can we learn from the lessons of American social movements and apply them to advancing a positive youth, family, and community agenda today?

During those three days there emerged new ways of thinking and new connections. The group, sparked by the unusual selection of speakers and dynamic participants, argued, queried, and debated. Most participants agreed that broadening the base for children and families, while keeping true to the spirit of helping every child, is a top priority.

The Aftermath

Conference participants felt that one of the most important next steps was to extend the discussions to a broader circle of colleagues. That has already begun to happen either as a result of Wingspread or through independent like-minded efforts. For example:

- The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth re-created much of the Wingspread program at their conference, "Mobilizing for Change," June 10-11 in Kansas City. The audience of approximately 150 foundation representatives, young people, public and private community partners, and advocacy organizations were encouraged to take these ideas home to their communities.
- The conference helped to shape the discussions of another Wingspread gathering, "Emerging Best Practices: Weaving the Work of Youth and Civic Development." "Telling the Truth About America's Youth," an upcoming conference to develop strategies for advancing more accurate information about America's youth, scheduled for July 1996 at Wingspread, was also inspired in part by this February conference.
- The Carter Center was host to a prestigious gathering of individuals interested in "developing a strategy for a national movement committed to improving results and strengthening community supports for children and families." The overall mission of the conference, addressed in Charles Bruner's paper, "Realizing a Vision for

Children, Families and Neighborhoods: An Alternative to Other Modest Proposals," was to take some positive steps toward creating strategies for a movement.

- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is planning a conference to examine major policy achievements for children. Organized by Larry Brown (Columbia University) and scheduled for late September or early October, the goal of this small conference is to more closely examine the relationship between children and society. Specifically, the group hopes to look at rationales and political strategies used to achieve victories for children. The goal is to translate those strategies into tools that can be used to promote progress on other child-related issues.

"We have to look at things through the eyes of what's been called the 'besieged' parent. As one myself, I don't want to hear people talking to me in 'edu-speak.' I worry about quality child care, a safe place for my kids to go after school, and continuity of health care as mine has changed four times in as many years."

—CINDY SESLER BALLARD
Director, The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth

Widening the Circle

To further the effort to expand this discussion, we have compiled some of the highlights of this program to share with you. We hope it will spark recognition of common concerns across issue areas and point the way toward valuable new strategies.

The Children's Partnership thanks all of those who gave so generously of their time and resources for this program: The Ford, Kellogg, and Packard Foundations and the Foundation for Child Development for their early support; the speakers, Charles W. Bray, John D. Dearth, Richard Kinch, Celinda Lake, Elizabeth Schrayner, Theda Skocpol, and Raphael Sonenshein; and the participants. We thank The Johnson Foundation for getting the ball rolling and for serving as extraordinary hosts.

We welcome your comments and hope you will let us know of your efforts to build a strong constituency for children.

Wendy Lazarus and Laurie Lipper
Co-Directors
The Children's Partnership

A Message From The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth

When The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth was launched in 1991, it took upon itself a unique challenge. The Coalition established itself to serve as a catalyst for community foundations to join together, not merely to improve the provision of services to youth, but more importantly, to enhance the profile of children, youth, and family issues both in the hearts and minds of our communities' citizenry and

among those who make public policies.

Over the past several years, approximately one hundred community foundations have signed on to work with the Coalition. Collectively, these foundations, many of whom are small and have never before engaged in proactive philanthropy, have accomplished a great deal. Our mem-

bers have initiated activities that range from producing "report cards" reflecting the condition of children in their communities to creating child advocacy organizations to engaging in reform of the systems serving children and families. There has been as much variety in local strategies as there has been in our membership.

The Coalition has sought to push the edges of our members' involvement with children's issues, believing that community foundations are a strategic point of entry for change at the local level. Community foundations are reposi-

tories of resources that substantially exceed their financial assets. They invariably have prestigious boards as well as knowledgeable staff whose influence in their respective communities can be extensive. They also function effectively as neutral conveners, making it possible to gather individuals of diverse interest and backgrounds, thereby forging common ground.

Given these facts, it is hardly surprising that the Coalition would offer itself as a forum in which to explore the possibilities for creating a children's movement. While such a movement would be breathtaking in its ambition, national in character, and inclusive of a multitude of actors, it remains true that "all politics are local." A children's movement, if it is to take hold, will be rooted, of necessity, in communities. And community foundations are logical facilitators of such a movement, even if the field has little experience in promoting such a grand venture. The Coalition is surely about the business of assisting our members in exploring uncharted territory. It is in this spirit that we are collaborating with The Children's Partnership and The Johnson Foundation.

*Marvin Cohen, Janice Kreamer, and
Cindy Sesler Ballard
The Coalition of Community
Foundations for Youth*

"We did some market research in Kansas City and ninety-seven percent of people's rated kids their No. 1 concern. Unless we find new ways to engage our fellow community members as active participants in addressing a solution, we'll never find one."

—JANICE C. KREAMER
*President, Greater Kansas City
Community Foundation & Affiliated Trusts*

A Message from The Johnson Foundation

The constituency for children and youth is neither broad nor deep. It focuses largely on legislation, social programs, and public funding. It is probably not a true movement, but it ought to be. To become such it will be necessary to change a culture that is partly indifferent and partly a menace.

We join others in believing that the bedrock need is more effective engagement of adults in the lives of children. We will have to learn to look at every young person not as a problem to be fixed but as a promise to be fulfilled. We must create a social environment that is friendly to children and their parents. We need to examine our educational and social programs and insist that they function as though their chief purposes are to protect and nurture. We all should become better collaborators, not just among public and private service providers, agencies, and funders, but across sectors.

We must include
business, law
enforcement,

nursing and public health, and our religious communities.

Answers are difficult but it is perhaps just as hard to formulate the right questions. The Johnson Foundation regards the conference reported on in this publication as one that knew better than most how to ask the right questions. These have now been asked and they will of course need to be revised as work continues. We hope others will join the effort in increasing numbers and with growing energy and conviction.

*Charles W. Bray and Richard Kinch
The Johnson Foundation*

"In 1971, the White House Conference on Children concluded: 'We like to think of America as a child-oriented society, but our actions belie our words. Our national rhetoric notwithstanding, the actual patterns of life in America today are such that children and families are lost.' The fact this is still true in 1996 shows the great need for this forum."

—RICHARD KINCH
Senior Program Officer, The Johnson Foundation



*Peter Benson,
Charles Bray, and
John Gardner*

Ten Essential Elements in an American Social Movement

Dr. Raphael Sonenshein

An American social movement is an attempt to enlist the hearts and minds of the U.S. citizenry to achieve significant social change, often in the face of serious opposition. Successful modern American movements share some common bonds. The Children's Partnership teamed up with Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Professor of Political Science at California State University at Fullerton, to offer the following "ten essential ingredients of a social movement." Below are excerpts from Sonenshein's presentation to the Wingspread conferees on who makes up a movement, what's at stake, and what makes it work.

1. A Core Constituency

Every movement starts with a person or a group who believes so strongly in a cause that it becomes an "obsession" that prompts a crusade for its universal acceptance. "Mothers Against Drunk Driving" tells you there's a group of mothers, generally those who have lost family members to drunken drivers, who are vitally interested in that.

One problem we have is that we cannot identify the stakeholders of the children's movement. We like to say kids are the core constituency, but I think we know that's not true.

Carolyn Reid-Green,
Bob Long



When we discuss policies, do we really expect children to respond with a tremendous outpouring of support? Honestly, we don't.

An obvious constituency is parents. If you pass a policy that helps parents, you can bet they will recognize it and mobilize around it.

2. Leaders

In every movement, one or a handful of individuals emerges as the symbol and chief promoter of the cause. They often have an extraordinary sense of the political climate and the will of the American public to embrace or reject new values.

Movement leaders don't sweat the details. We've only had one president in my opinion who was a movement leader and that was Ronald Reagan. His job was done in May of 1981 because his job was to cut taxes thirty percent. He only got it down twenty-five percent, but that was close enough. He spent the next seven years preventing that tax cut from being taken away. He didn't worry about his budget or much of anything else.

We are very much in a world of numbers and statistics, as in "forty-seven percent of those aged eighteen to forty-seven do....." But movement leaders don't paint by the numbers. Franklin Roosevelt said, "I see a third of a nation ill-clothed, ill-housed and ill-fed." That's an acceptable statistic for mobilizing masses of people.

The language of leaders soars. "I have a dream" is one of the most powerful speeches ever given by any movement leader. If you go through Martin Luther King's speech, there's just one line after another that moves your heart. We have to ask how we use language.

3. A Mass Audience

How do you look at people who aren't part of your core constituency? Are they customers or heathens who are wrong until converted? The environmental movement chose to look at people as potential recyclers rather than dirty slobs.

This is asking you to like the people, which is harder than you think. We like people in the abstract, but not when they don't join our movement. We tend to use phrases like "why don't WE like our kids more" when we really mean "why don't YOU like kids," as if the voters can't figure this out.

You'd be amazed at your capacity to reach people if you withhold the desire to straighten them out. We need to accept people as they are and show how we can help them.

"We need a strategy that's going to build from the neighborhood level up. Otherwise, people will see whatever the agenda is as being foisted on them by some pointy-headed outsiders."

—MARVIN R. COHEN

Director, Children, Youth and Families Initiative, Chicago Community Trust

4. Opposition/Enemies

Movements based on deeply held beliefs will draw equally strong opponents who may be hurt by the success of a movement or disagree with its values. However, enemies can fuel the movement.

We've designed the world of advocacy so that it's awfully hard to be against what we say. Whatever we want to support is good because we define it as good for kids. But that vocabulary has come back to bite us.

Opponents have to find ways to be against us that are not direct. Now everybody is for kids. When asked why he continued to allow members of Congress to keep the frequent-flier miles on publicly supported air travel to their districts, Newt Gingrich replied: "It's a kids' issue. I wanted to help keep their families together. If they use it to take a vacation with their kids, who can be against that?"

We have to unmask opponents. This means avoiding generational politics. I was going to start my speech saying, "Isn't it amazing that the elderly are generally out of poverty and kids are not." But I stopped myself. It's a setup to be poised against the elderly because their constituency is stronger than children's. Avoid letting the press draw you in with cover stories like "Grandma vs. the Kids." That's not the trade-off going on. And it prevents us from tying kids to their parents and grandparents.

Pick your enemies wisely. In other words, it's better to be Elliott Ness than Carrie Nation. She's the judgmental person who goes into the bar, takes the beer out of the hand of the working-class guy, says "stop drinking," takes her hatchet and knocks everything over. Ness went after the breweries, the institution, and was the hero.

5. Vital Interests at Stake

A movement has to be about something the public thinks is of the utmost importance: war or peace, pro-life or pro-choice, saving or

destroying the earth.

Ask a group of voters what their vital interests are and they will not say, "society does not invest sufficiently in children." Patrick Buchanan is the only person who understands that politics this year is about the economic insecurity of the vast American middle class.

"Downsizing" is a much more explosive word than anything in the entire children's agenda. But the economic security of parents may have a bigger impact on the fate of children than any children's policies as presently defined.

Take portability of health insurance: Wouldn't it affect the prospects of kids if the twenty-seven million people who are terrified of losing their health insurance didn't have to worry about it any more? And wouldn't those parents notice that a difference had occurred in their lives, which would create a constituency that would support other initiatives?

That means defining interests in VOTERS' terms, not ours. We've tried to take what we think are kids' interests and get parents and other voters to see it as in their interest, such as "if you take care of kids now, they won't mug you when they're fifteen." Focus groups told us they think they'll pay now AND pay later. We haven't taken the risk of asking how meeting the vital interests of other people will help the interests of kids.

6. Core Values at Stake

Movements reach people by connecting their interests to their perceptions of themselves as Americans through values like fairness, individual responsibility, and community.

Countries that don't have all this liking of kids but have wonderful social policies for kids see it as a practical decision. Americans, perhaps uniquely among Western democracies, believe that all social policies are either right or wrong. When you talk to people about welfare reform, you hear talk of "work" and "deserving." Every policy that doesn't pass that moral filter will fail no matter how practical, no matter how many dollars you'll save at the back end compared

"We're working on what we call 'Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth' in the belief you can't have one without the other. This means shifting the conversation from reducing problems to promoting the positive for youth through their first two decades. Some forty cities are already mobilizing along these lines."

—PETER L. BENSON
President, Search Institute

to what you invest at the front end.

We have to ask ourselves what people should believe about us if our position is that we like kids more than anyone else. There's nothing in that about limits or the role of parents or about responsibility. So they think of us as the permissive parents who can't say "no" to anybody. Maybe if we "liked kids less," we'd be able to do more for them.

7. Hidden Agendas

Race, class, and ideology act like a riptide under the surface of many movements and can be exploited by opponents. A movement must know where it stands and be ready to counter inevitable accusations of favoritism, racism, and other hot-button name-calling.

The anti-war movement was predominantly white middle-class college students faced with the draft, many of whom also had a moral objection to the war. If people had said that openly, the anti-war movement would have had a better reputation. But as soon as the draft stopped, the anti-war movement lost a bit of its steam. It would be much better to say, "This is what we are, that's our hidden agenda, so we've got a problem,

which is how are we going to build a majority with people who are not part of that group?"

What's our hidden agenda? We say we're interested in everyone's kids, but we're not sure we are. People decode us immediately. If we're for midnight basketball, push midnight basketball. Don't bury it in a big bill, thinking that the opposition won't read every single bit of the bill and put out the commercials that say, "Aha, here's the midnight basketball bill."

8. Acts of Symbolic Power

Acts of symbolism are the flashpoints where the values, passions, and goals merge to become part of the national vocabulary.

Traditional politics don't use these effectively: consider the politician holding the baby. But movements draw these almost magically, although usually they're planned. Rosa Parks not sitting down in the section she was

assigned was an act of symbolic power, as was the Boston Tea Party. Ronald Reagan's firing the air traffic controllers was a single act that probably accounts for thousands of people not being in unions today.

But you have to remember that these acts have to be handled extremely carefully. One recent example is the anti-immigration Proposition 187 in California. In the last few weeks before the election, a lot of kids walked out of school, got Mexican flags, and marched up and down the streets. I had to turn the TV off because it was too painful to watch mass movement suicide. My students in Orange County who were on the borderline looked at that and said, "I'll be darned if I'm going to vote for an initiative to support the government of Mexico against the people of the United States." That single thing decided the vote for a lot of people.

In budget debates a few years ago, the pitch was "pick on someone your own size." Children's advocates in San Francisco had kids push red wagons. But symbolic acts involving kids after a while get mixed up with the fact everyone loves kids. If we're not careful, we could have kids pushing wheelbarrows to get rid of the food stamp program.

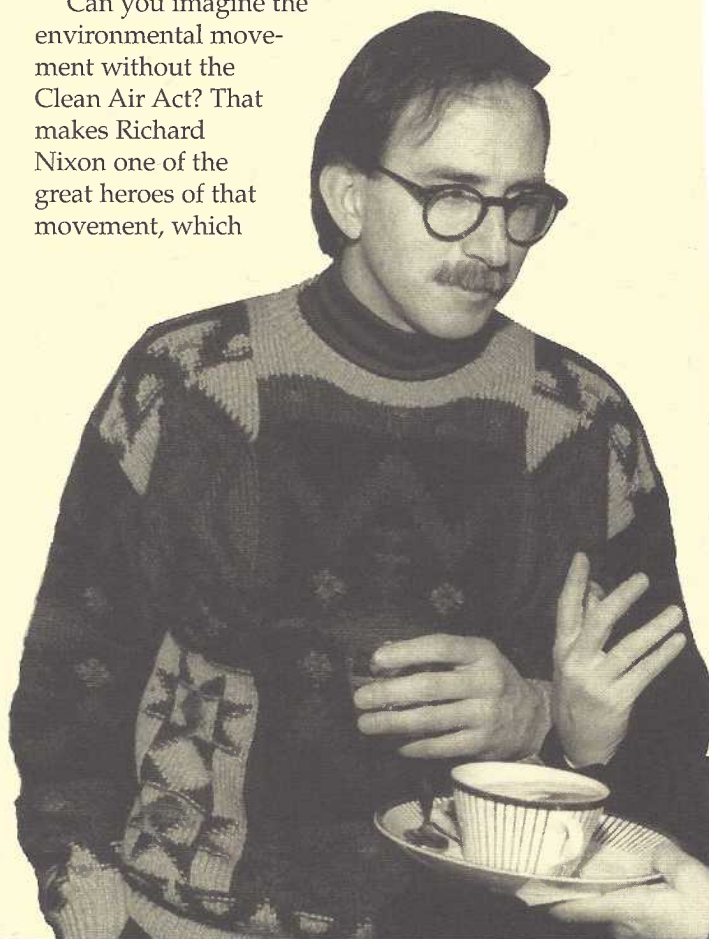
9. Milestones

These are most often public policy landmarks that provide real change as well as fuel the movement.

Can you imagine the environmental movement without the Clean Air Act? That makes Richard Nixon one of the great heroes of that movement, which

"We might consider tapping the strengths of established organizations. I sit on the board of the March of Dimes and it would be great if we could tap into how they mobilize on the state as well as national level."

—BARBARA B. BLUM
President, Foundation for
Child Development



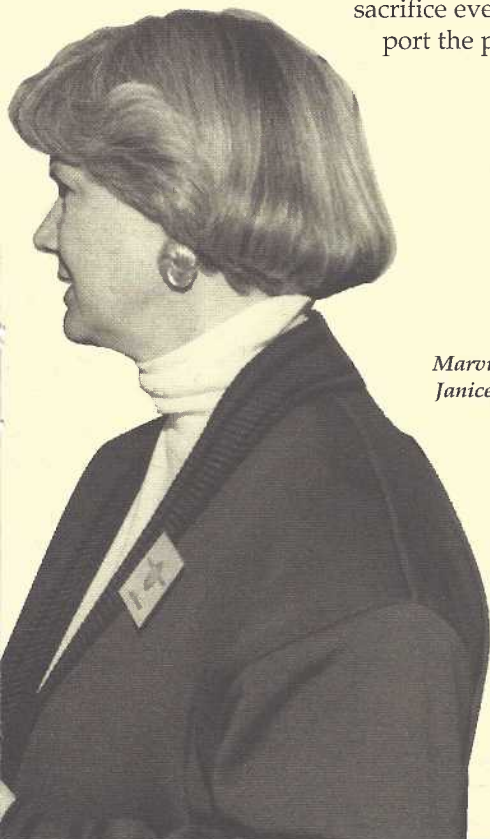
"I question if there's time for a movement as more kids—especially minorities and those at risk—are living in poverty and in environments where it's increasingly difficult to survive let alone thrive."

—SANDRA BROCK JIBRELL
Associate Director, Annie E. Casey
Foundation

President Clinton pointed out in the State of the Union address to deafening silence from the Republican side of the aisle.

The GI Bill is deep within the culture. It's amazing to hear people talk about it so emphatically, but isn't it just a law? So laws — these milestones — must have meaning. Even Reagan, who found it easy to do the 1981 tax cut, itself a milestone, found he couldn't go after Social Security, a previous milestone.

But we don't have any such thing. I've been reading about something called a Family Security Act — note it's not called a Children's Security Act — which raises the question about spreading our net wider. Maybe we ought to look at portability of health insurance as a constituency-building milestone for kids. Wasn't the Social Security Act a tremendous milestone for the children of people who benefited? For the first time in American history, people knew they could work and have secure retirement for themselves and social protection for their parents so they wouldn't have to sacrifice every day to support the people they love.



Marvin Cohen and
Janice Kreamer

10. Think and Act Locally

You build momentum by translating the vision into simple steps that can be taken by people in neighborhoods and communities across the country. The civil rights movement had phenomenal local sense: Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery are etched in our memory.

This is one of our greatest strengths: We've got the community foundations and The Coalition of Community Foundations, which is a perfect model of local action nationally networked. We can do fine as long as we realize that all American communities fundamentally believe they are on their own, which is why you don't go to San Diego and say, "This is the way L.A. does it, so you do it this way too."

You're not being asked to recreate the environmental movement and call it the children's movement. You're being asked to take some of the energy of a movement to move you from where you are without losing what you've got, which is the fact you're good people who have shown up for kids all along.

Public opinion is a symphony. But we're off in a corner playing old Bob Dylan songs on the guitar. We don't hear the music yet. The notes don't sound harmonic at first. But after you sit in the audience for a while, you start to hear things that make some sense. Then you'll make the most beautiful music because you'll hear America singing and you're singing the same tune. When that day comes, you will make social policy in this country. On that note, let's learn to sing.

Raphael Sonensheim is Professor of Political Science at California State University at Fullerton. For the Fall Semester 1995, he was appointed a Visiting Scholar at both the Department of Political Science and the Center for Multiethnic and Transnational Studies at the University of Southern California, where he is conducting research for a book on multiracial coalition politics in the new Los Angeles. Dr. Sonensheim has published widely on the subject of interracial coalitions. In addition to his many articles, his book, Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles, was published in 1993 and won the 1994 Ralph J. Bunche Award from the American Political Science Association. Since 1992, Dr. Sonensheim has been assisting communities throughout the nation to develop political action plans to bring about social progress, under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Kansas City Community Foundation, and other community foundations. His work also has focused on children's issues and promoting diversity. Dr. Sonensheim received his B.A. from Princeton University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale University.

"It's always messy and a little chaotic for a while when you're changing things. History doesn't look like history when you're living through it; it only looks tidy later."

—JOHN W. GARDNER
Professor, Graduate School of Business,
Stanford University

A Children's Movement and the Broader History of American Social Movements

Dr. Theda Skocpol

What lessons can children's advocates learn from history? Dr. Theda Skocpol, Professor of Government and Sociology at Harvard University, and President of the Social Science History Association, examines earlier successful U.S. social movements that created policies that provide security and opportunity for a broad cross-section of Americans.

History can give us a sense of lost alternatives that may help us gain fresh perspectives for the future. Among the highly successful movements that changed or established social policy milestones were the early 19th century movement to create public schools, the Civil War

*Wendy Lazarus (seated),
Theda Skocpol,
John Deardourff, and
Pat Konley*



benefits system, the early 20th century Mothers' and Children's Programs, the Social Security System, and the GI Bill of Rights of 1944. Each had three characteristics in common.

1. In every case there was a general sense that the beneficiaries deserved to be rewarded for their service to the community or for their potential to serve the nation.

The United States was the first country in the world to help children by creating public schools, not only to prepare students for the work force but also — and here's the important emphasis — to teach them citizenship and service to their country. The Civil War benefits program ensured that those who had saved the Union would not have to turn to charity. By 1910, more than a quarter of all elderly American men were receiving generous pensions from the federal government. It's hard to imagine these days, but the Mothers' and Children's Programs were created at a time when the mother who stayed home was considered a valuable contributor to the national good. Social Security has been consistently justified as payback for people's tax contributions and older people see it as a return for a life of work, definitely a contribution to the nation. Finally, the GI Bill rewarded men who saved our civilization during World War II.

2. The second common characteristic of successful social programs is the ability to build bridges between more and less privileged Americans.

Social Security is not called the "End Poverty Program," but it is the most effective in pulling people above the poverty line. Even now, in the face of ever-changing fiscal circumstances and a ten-year campaign to soften public support, Social Security has provided security across class lines.

3. All of these policies were nurtured by a partnership of government and volunteer associations.

These were not just nonprofit organizations, but membership organizations that spanned from localities to the national level, with special attention at the state level. And all involved "average" citizens.

During the public school movement, volunteers traveled around the country energizing citizens, reaching into small towns and farming areas. Civil War benefits were reinforced by the Grand Army of the Republic, a volunteer civic organization that crossed racial and ethnic lines.

The association brought veterans into contact with government programs, monitored those programs and, of course, pushed for their expansion even when they came under attack.

Social Security is a bit of an exception. The program's chief advocacy group, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), does not have the local membership characteristic I've been discussing. And many AARP leaders recognize they are vulnerable in this area.

Finally, the GI Bill, which I would argue is the most important family policy program we have ever had, succeeded because of the American Legion. A lot of political leaders did not want to subsidize such an expensive program, but the Legion, which had membership in every community in the United States, was able to pressure Congress to pass this comprehensive bill.

Modern U.S. child advocacy started through the efforts of women, and not just higher-educated ones like Jane Addams. Most of the energy came from married ladies, as they called themselves, who thought it a good idea to carry "mother thought" to all the spheres of American life. Civically active women believe that if women's place is in the home, then we'll just say that the nation is the home and it needs women to shape the values so that families and children can flourish. Thus was born the National Congress of Mothers, which evolved into the PTA in 1924.

Between the 1890s and 1920s, when the Mothers' and Children's Movement flourished, a series of policies were enacted, mostly at the state level, to protect the women in the labor force because they were actual or potential mothers. There were local efforts to support schools, playgrounds, and kindergartens. The juvenile court system was established. At the federal level, the Children's Bureau was formed in 1912 to look after the well-being of all American children, not just the poor. And in 1921, the Sheppard-Towner bill was enacted to subsidize health-education programs for all American mothers and newborn children.

Key to bringing all this about were voluntary groups of married women in every significant locality, as well as at the state and national level. These organizations were membership-based and connected in a remarkable communication network. They set the agenda and pressed through a whole series of social policies for children and families in the early 20th century — even though they didn't have the right to vote!

How did they do it? By creating a moral imperative and a sense of common cause at the state and local level. It's an inspiring example.

What Does This Tell Us About the Future?

The current situation is one of dire challenges. In light of budget-cutting politics, it is far from over. To me, the question is: Is there a way to redefine policy goals and build constituencies in a manner that retrieves some of the nationwide, cross-class, cross-community connections of the past and involves civic as well as professional advocacy?

We need to create a parent-friendly society by asking employers to play by rules that allow people to raise families and connect to their community. We can hold politicians to that standard across party lines by asking what they are doing to make it possible for parents to do their job. This rhetoric can be used to set up partnerships between employers and employees, schools and families, other constituencies and families, and the national budget and families.

There also has to be a nationwide network that can articulate a theme and get the message out to the media. All those associations I described were able to do that. It must draw from all three levels: a national presence that would include meetings where topics are discussed; more activity on the state level, which is very important; and locally to include existing organizations and actual parents. That's the best way to identify the values and issues that will percolate up the network.

Thecla Skocpol is Professor of Government and Sociology at Harvard University, where she also serves as Chair of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Committee on Public Service. Dr. Skocpol is the author of the following books: States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China; Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Historical Perspective; Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (which won five scholarly awards); and her newest book, Boomerang: Clinton's Health Security Effort and the Turn Against Government in U.S. Politics. Currently, Dr. Skocpol is working on two major projects about U.S. politics and social policy: a study of episodes of health care reform in the 20th century United States, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and a book about the treatment of the elderly, children, and working families in U.S. social policy, for the Twentieth Century Fund and W.W. Norton. She is a member of the American Political Science Association Council and the Editorial Board of the American Political Science Review, and is the 1996 President of the Social Science History Association. She received her B.A. from Michigan State University and her Ph.D. from Harvard University.

NOTE: A monograph of Dr. Skocpol's full speech will be published by The Children's Partnership in Fall, 1996.

Public Opinion: A Dynamic Political Context for Building a Constituency for Children's Issues

Celinda Lake

Celinda Lake, President of Lake Research, Inc., a national polling firm based in Washington, D.C., provides the following snapshot of the electorate and how they regard children's issues.

Who Voters Are

Only thirty-three percent of voters have children under eighteen, compared to one hundred percent who drink water or seventy-five percent who have a job. They are immediately concerned with the safety of their drinking water and the quality of jobs, but the status of children is a distant commitment. Grandparents are becoming more committed to their grandkids. But if you put a Social Security check up against a grandkid, they're going to vote for the check.

Who They're Interested in

People will back long-term investment for very young kids, but they do not like teens — even their own. They believe we're talking about poor children. But more than one in eight voters said that middle-class children need just as much help as poor children.

"Contrary to the popular notion, there is an incredible rise in the number of young people joining associations. Typically, we call them gangs. But they are driven by the same desires: to affiliate, to be valued, to contribute. We must foster those principles by building a better understanding between youth development and civic development."

—ROBERT LONG

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

What They're Concerned About

The government will shut down over it, but Americans are convinced that the deficit is a children's issue and the budget should be balanced. In 1993 we asked people, "Which is your top priority — health care or education for children, or balancing the budget?" Balancing the budget won. In our most recent survey, the issues were tied because people — women and people of color in particular — believe the cuts are going too far. So even though people are very willing to spend money on kids even if it increases taxes, the numbers go down when you say it means an increase in the deficit.

The other thing that we see as a real priority is violence. It is the new cancer. The issue that most unites women across all constituencies is child abuse. Middle-class families believe gangs can capture any kid.

What They Hear Us Say

Half of Americans readily admit they cannot tell their right from their left, politically. Asked to identify a leader of the religious right, they cited Jesse Jackson. When I questioned them, "Do you think he's right?" they said, "No, I think he's wrong!" So the language that we use in that arena is meaningless to half the population.

The second language that doesn't work for us is the language of rights. When we get down to the real bottom line about health care, it ends up being a dialogue about children having a right to benefits. But people basically don't believe that rights and kids fit together. It's not accidental that one of the pieces of legislation that the Gingrich Revolution's going to be pushing when they get back is the Christian Coalition's Parental Rights Bill.

Their Vision of Help

In giving up a bit on government, voters — particularly women — are becoming much more aggressive about better partnerships between business and community and kids. We've had businesses move money out of their city opera into a kid's park because, frankly, today kids are better politics than culture.

Who They Want to Hear

People are tired of the baby-kissing politicians. They believe people who are involved in public service, ordinary people, community voices. It's important they be non-political and

"As we wrap up our work here today, I see the good, the bad, and the ugly of this meeting. The good is the caliber of the people who are attending this meeting and addressing the critical issues of building a new children's movement. The bad is that so far in this meeting there has not been enough expression of concern and urgency about the needs of the poorest and the neediest children in America. We cannot disown these kids. The ugly is that it seems as if concern for the needs of the most disenfranchised kids in this nation — kids like those that live in Watts — must be abandoned in the search for the common ground in which to seed a new children's movement. It seems as if inclusion of poor children is somehow irrelevant to the new children's movement being discussed here today. What we need is a movement whose table is big enough for all children."

—CAROLYN REID-GREEN
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Drew Child Development Corp.

draw from bipartisan and diverse coalitions. For the clean air coalition, we found that the strongest argument was children and the two strongest spokespeople were the American Lung Association and the Council of Pediatricians, an organization that doesn't exist. But people loved that organization because it seemed a powerful voice on the subject.

America is setting priorities right now. For seniors, another group that voters have a great deal of compassion for, they are going to draw the line on Social Security and Medicare. But they have no idea what drawing the line for children means. They feel the basics for children should include health care, education, safe schools, and economic security. And we only confuse them more because we never tell them the one thing they're supposed to do.



Barbara Blum and
Henry Thomas

Celinda Lake is President of Lake Research, Inc., a research-based strategy firm. Her most recent areas of concentration have been the changing politics of the western states, health care in the 1990s, and children as a political issue. Ms. Lake is a pollster for US News & World Report, and an advisor to The Wall Street Journal. She is one of the Democratic Party's leading political strategists, serving as a tactician and senior advisor to the National Party committees, dozens of Democratic incumbents and challengers at all levels of the electoral process, and democratic parties in several Eastern European countries and South Africa. During the 1992 election cycle, Ms. Lake oversaw focus group research for the Clinton/Gore Campaign and served as a general consultant throughout the campaign. Ms. Lake has served as Political Director of the Women's Campaign Fund, Research Director at the Institute for Social Research in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Policy Analyst for the Subcommittee on Select Education. Ms. Lake is the author of Public Opinion Polling: A Manual for Public Interest Groups, published in 1986. She received her M.A. in Political Science and Survey Research from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and a certificate in Political Science from the University of Geneva in Switzerland. Ms. Lake received her B.A. from Smith College.

"We need to broaden the number of people under the children's tent. Harvard is partnering with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to get higher education, from community colleges to research universities, to use their expertise and reputations to work more systematically with communities on behalf of kids."

—CHARLES DEUTSCH
Senior Associate, Harvard Project
on Schooling and Children

John D. Deardourff

Helping children depends on winning the support of legislators from city hall to the White House. That means the children's community needs to sharpen its political skills to be more effective, says John D. Deardourff, president of McLean, Virginia-based Deardourff/The Media Company. Here, he shares the results of two years of personal interviews with 177 state legislative leaders in all 50 states on what they see as the issues facing children and the legislators' impressions of child advocacy organizations.

Ask legislative leaders who are the most effective advocates and their answer — nearly unanimously across the country — is the American Association of Retired Persons, the National Rifle Association, whatever the teachers' organizations are,

then the unions and business interests, such as the state Chamber of Commerce or industry council.

Asked if they knew personally anyone who advocated for children, the legislators identified only others who served with them in government. Their idea of children's issues is public education: It is the big item in the state budget, the most debated issue, a place where interests align, where the teachers' unions and professional educators weigh in heavily. Most were only vaguely familiar with the details of any program involving kids. Many have never been to a Head Start program, neonatal unit in a hospital, or any other single facility serving children.

They don't see that they pay any price for not doing child advocacy. They don't get letters from people in their district or somebody who stands up at a public meeting and asks, "Why did you vote this way on this bill?" So if there's an extra \$20 million lying around, you can be sure that it's going to seniors before it goes to kids.

"One challenge is to find new collaborations, such as getting the International Association of Chiefs of Police involved. As a former police commissioner and lapsed lawyer, I can tell you the incarceration strategy is not going to solve inner-city problems."

—HENRY M. THOMAS III
Vice President for Youth Development,
National Urban League Inc.

Exercising Political Muscle

Say What You Mean

Legislators don't sense the child advocacy community is unified in terms of goals or priorities. They say, "We know what AARP wants; we know what the anti-smoking lobby wants." Children's hospitals in most states do a good job of going in and defending their budgets. So do a lot of the day-care providers, who have an association that pays for lobbyists. But overall there is no coalition that can give a legislator the kids' agenda for this year and the bills it will take to get them accomplished. Whether we talk about kids or families, the language needs to be both moral and universal as in 'all children' or 'all youth' or 'all families.'

Marshall Your Forces

We have to organize nationally and locally. Legislators see organizations with grassroots components as too powerful to ignore. As one state representative from Pennsylvania said, "The people who show up at meetings are the old folks who identify themselves as card-carrying members of AARP."

"What gives me hope are the community-based 'beacon schools' in New York. Started as a project for youth, it has turned into a community keeping a school open for 2,000 hours beyond the 1,000 hours it's supposed to be. If we had gone in with a program on truancy, drugs, or other problem, it wouldn't have drawn such a strong constituency. But the community wanted it enough that it has stayed from one mayoral administration to the next. Beacons are a process for rebuilding our neighborhoods and bringing back a sense of community. A lot of what's in a beacon is not new. It's returning to what a community used to be. It becomes the village green."

—RICHARD MURPHY

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

Include Local Elites

Typical state legislators are very insecure. They need to know that the big people in town are interested in these issues. One legislator told me, "If I get one letter from a doctor or a lawyer or somebody who owns a company in my district, I pick up the phone and call him."

Also Consider Partisanship

Political figures in both parties believe that most child advocates are liberal Democrats. That doesn't make the Democrats uncomfortable, but it makes the Republicans exceedingly uncomfortable. Unless we broaden the children's coalition to include people who are not comfortable thinking of themselves as Democrats, we're not going to make headway.

Know the Ropes

I cannot overemphasize how much legislators respect effective full-time lobbying in the capitol. To them, this is someone who understands the rhythms of the legislative process, that it's too late to parade on the day that the vote is being taken. It's somebody — volunteer or paid — who knows that next year's budget is already being developed by the committees, the legislature, the governor's office, and the state budget office. Foundations must find ways to train and support more effective year-round, state-based advocacy work, especially now that program control is shifting from Washington to the states.

Get the Facts

This is where those in the foundation world who have the money can really help. Legislators want research related to their district as in, "How many kids in my district could be in Head Start if we had the money?" And they need it in an easy-to-digest way. They want somebody to sit with them for ninety seconds and tell them what they need to know so they can go on to the next thing.

Be Willing to Scratch Their Back

Legislators talked a lot about how important it is to them that they have friends when they need them, especially when they're running for office. They want to be able to call on the time, money, or prestige of an organization as in, "I know that I can call the head of the local teachers' union in my district, and they will send a

dozen people to do mailings for me." Many of them said they wouldn't even know who to begin to call to get a child advocate's help.

Look at the Bigger Picture

Those who advocate for children, and those who provide services to children and families, must become more actively involved personally in the political process — from lobbying to supporting friendly elected officials to running for public office themselves. The children's movement has to take some action that shows it has political muscle. This could be as minimal as handwritten letters to legislators: If a legislator gets five handwritten letters on an issue, that's a big deal. And consider voter registration, making it easier to vote. In Oregon, in an off-season, off-election where turnout might have been twenty percent, it's sixty percent because they used mail-in ballots.

"In the past, some of us may have seen community issues as turf occupied by the so-called other side. But this forum will reinforce my involvement locally in Washington."

—JAMES O. GIBSON
Senior Associate, The Urban Institute

John D. Deardourff was the Co-Founder, with Douglas Bailey, of Bailey, Deardourff & Associates, one of the country's leading political planning, consulting, and advertising firms. With Mr. Bailey's recent retirement from the firm, the firm's name has been changed to Deardourff/The Media Company. Mr. Deardourff is also a partner in the polling firm Bennett-Deardourff Opinion Research. He currently serves as Chairman of the Board of Public Voice, an advocacy group concerned with national food and health policy. He is also a long-time member of the board of The Children's Defense Fund and the League of Conservation Voters. He is a national Co-Chair of Voters for Choice, a bipartisan political action committee, and a Director of the Women's Campaign Research Fund. He received his B.A. from Wabash College and his M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. In 1977, he was a fellow of the Institute of Politics at Harvard University. In 1978, he was a Conroy Fellow at St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire.

Building a Strong Constituency for Children

Elizabeth Schrayer

Elizabeth Schrayer is President of Schrayer and Associates, a political consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. Her grassroots lobbying efforts include organizing activists in all 435 Congressional districts. Here she offers ways for the children's community to get more power brokers and others to join forces with them.

The good thing about this community is that you already have an advocate in every single Congressional district and in every single state. We just have to find them. Constituency-building is an art, not a science, despite all the charts and graphs we can produce. There are no easy or right answers. I'm here to help you take the resources you have and put them together in the best possible package.

Who Are Our Constituents?

When it comes to children, those who care about "at-risk" children are probably a pretty

small circle of people. "At-risk" children may not be a big enough umbrella theme to capture enough people to influence decision-makers. For example, people who care about children are a broader group. And most likely, people who care about children at risk also get turned on by the issue of children generally. Next come parents, then family, then community. Grow as big as you can without taking away the agenda you're trying to accomplish. It might look something like figure 1, pictured left.

How Do We Motivate Our Constituency?

This movement needs to be multi-faceted. This community has to stop thinking that everyone has to be or do everything. Everybody is not going to be motivated by the same themes or be willing to take the same action. That's OK.

You have to think of who your audience is and make your message relevant to them. Teachers should be natural allies, but they are also worried about their pensions and salaries. Pediatricians also deal with children, but they're focused on the health-care system. We've got to get inside each of these constituents' heads.

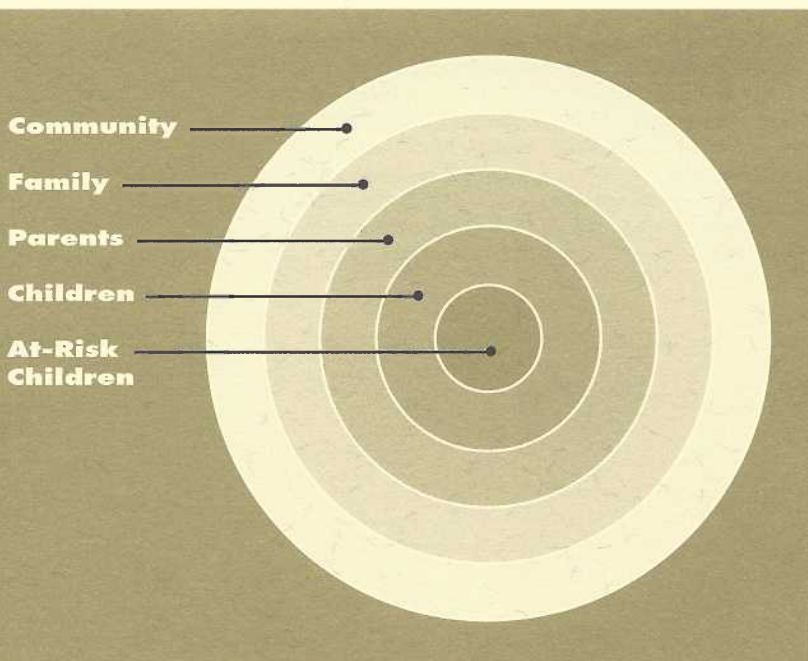
Using my old political jargon, we have to start with those already in our camp, those who are highly motivated, the "base." Then there are the people who care about their kids, their own self-interests and economic security, and might touch the fringe of our campaign, the "swing." They're probably moderately motivated, depending on what we ask them to do. These would include parents, teachers, cops, churches — all the ones that seem like they should be part of this but so far aren't. How do we motivate them? Cops, for example, might get more involved if you talk about street violence and putting more cops on the street to protect kids.

Next Comes Activity

There's local activity, there's advocacy activity, there's media activity, there's political activity. If we start to break it down, different groups of people might participate in different activities which, when pieced together, could influence policy.

Your strategy also needs to take into account the volatility of the electorate and therefore of our elected officials. One-half of Congress was elected after 1990, and the

Figure 1:
Building a broader
base for children.



statistics for some local states are even higher. So we need to be bipartisan. We need to find a way to talk to Republicans since they're in power now. But tomorrow they may not be, so you have to plan a strategy that is bipartisan and will ring true with future decision-makers. The same is true about the economy: We need to build into our message themes that will withstand economic trends.

The last challenge is the Christian Coalition's family movement. Their priorities include school choice, vouchers, protecting parental rights, and opposing the Family Medical Leave Act. The way that they present these themes is very attractive to a much broader group of people than may believe in the substance of their policy. If we don't deal with this challenge, we're going to make a big mistake as it is a very energetic movement that claims 1.7 million members.

Elizabeth Schraye is the President of Schraye and Associates, Inc., a national political consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. Founded in June 1994, Schraye and Associates specializes in helping trade associations, government affairs offices, and corporations adjust to the ever-changing political environment through effective grassroots organizing and political advocacy. Ms. Schraye worked on Capitol Hill as well as in state government. She has traveled to nearly every state in the country, participated in every Democratic and Republican convention since 1984, organized activists in all 435 Congressional districts, and worked with Senators, Representatives, Mayors, Governors, State Legislators, and party leaders throughout the country. Described as one of the "architects and builders" of the pro-Israel community's grassroots movement, Ms. Schraye has played a significant role in creating and leading the Jewish community's national political operation. From 1983 until the spring of 1994, she worked at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Originally from Chicago, Ms. Schraye graduated from the University of Michigan.

"We are at a point in history when children's leaders can feel proud to have accomplished significant policy wins with a relatively narrow base of supporters. Imagine what we could achieve together if we could really tap into the millions more who work and care about kids — teachers, parents, pediatricians, cops....."

—WENDY LAZARUS

Co-Director, The Children's Partnership

Where Do We Go From Here? Next Steps

*Wendy Lazarus,
Laurie Lipper, and
Dr. Raphael Sonenshein*

While this report provides excerpts from the presentations, the bulk of the time at the conference was spent in vigorous discussion. There were many specific suggestions ranging from the need to involve youth, religious leaders, law enforcement, and more diverse children's leaders to the importance of the November 1996 elections. Wendy Lazarus, Laurie Lipper, and Dr. Raphael Sonenshein helped facilitate a discussion that resulted in some more general directional conclusions. These will help frame what our next steps might be:

1. Listen

We must listen to what voters, families, parents, kids, and communities are saying they want. Listening is a key to successfully advancing an agenda. Tools from grassroots community organizing to public opinion research should be used to "hear" what the community is saying.

2. Join Together

We need unifying themes or goals. All social movements have at one point or another found definition and purpose in policy milestones. How to fashion the most effective milestone(s) for children and families is a next step.

3. Community Action

We must encourage the energizing and organizing of communities across the nation. The innovations, enthusiasm, and integrity of local groups are valuable assets that must be tapped.

4. National Action

Local efforts must have a national connection of some sort. In the past, national associations with local affiliates like the National PTA or the National Urban League have played a key role in connecting local efforts into a national movement.

"If we're talking about organizing by community and family organizations, perhaps we should look at the Moose. They're a growing organization that has gone from being a Saturday night drinking club for the working-class man to a place where parents and children gather."

—JOHN L. McKNIGHT
Director of Community Studies, Center
for Urban Affairs and Policy Research,
Northwestern University

5. Integrity

We must find a way to connect to a broad public while keeping true to the spirit of helping every child, including the least sympathetic.

6. Honesty

We must find a way to face tough questions, such as those involving race and class and gender, in a manner that has integrity and that helps the cause of children and communities move forward.

Laurie Lipper,
John McKnight



7. The Long View

We must recognize that building a powerful and deep constituency capable of delivering major wins for children takes time. Therefore, we need to develop short-term as well as multi-year strategies.

Conclusion

Many people around the country are already organizing around the same desire to build broad-based community support for children. One example is the Stand for Children of June 1, 1996, which has helped generate attention and organizing around children's issues. Writing on that occasion in the *New Yorker*, June 3, 1996, Betty Friedan says:

"The power of these great national organizations of community volunteers in conjunction with the women's movement and the other forces for equality, in defense of children: this is a new kind of power. With luck, that power can unite America in a renewed spirit of community — one that does not deny our diverse, separate, and sometimes conflicting interests but seeks to subsume them, and even advance them, in a larger commitment to the future."

Moving children's interests higher up on the national list of priorities and finding common ground so that millions more Americans can activate their spoken support for children may or may not look like some of the social movements of the past. And, in the end, that is not the most important concern.

What is important is that we build both long- and short-term strategies and efforts to help parents, families, and communities to realize the best for their children.

Just as this original conference has sparked new activities, we believe that hundreds of people and organizations are finding their own "movements" for children. The original three sponsors of this conference, The Children's Partnership, The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth, and The Johnson Foundation are also preparing a follow-up plan to develop next-generation strategies for the children's movement.

We look forward to keeping you informed as this program moves forward and to working closely with you.