Our 30-Year Journey

The greatest part of a road trip isn’t arriving at your destination but all the things you encounter along the way. Thirty years ago, Alaska Children’s Trust (ACT) began a journey that has been filled with successes and failures, partners and doubters, movement forward and several steps back. All of these experiences combined make us who we are today and give us the strength and skills to continue on.

Child abuse and neglect is a complex issue — it has taken us decades to be where we are today and it will take decades to change it. The numbers help us tell the story. Alaska has one of the highest rates of child abuse and neglect in the nation, per capita. Before the age of 7, one in three children will have a report made to child welfare and one in every 12 children will experience a substantiated report of child abuse and neglect.

ACT officially began its journey in 1988 but planning for one of the most epic adventures began much earlier.

In the late 1970s, pediatrician and educator Dr. Ray Helfer saw trust funds being used to care for our nation’s highways and wildlife and thought, “Why not our nation’s children … our most precious resource?” His idea has been the catalyst for a nationwide movement to create trusts in every state, with a shared goal to ensure our most precious resource is protected. Inspired by Dr. Helfer’s visionary concept, an ad hoc committee of the Alaska Women’s Commission drafted legislation in the mid-1980s, which resulted in the creation of the Alaska Children’s Trust.

When ACT was formed, it was unfunded. For several years, advocates from across the state tried numerous times and with different ideas to get funding for the Trust, with little to no success. In 1995, Governor Tony Knowles appointed five state commissioners, the Attorney General and Lieutenant Governor Fran Ulmer to serve on a children’s cabinet, with a mission to ensure Alaska’s children have opportunities for happy, healthy and productive lives. With leadership from the Children’s Cabinet, Knowles’ Chief of Staff Jim Ayers and legislators like Ramona Barnes, ACT came to a crossroads, giving it a new opportunity. ACT’s statute was rewritten to streamline the structure and empower it to ensure Alaska’s children and families thrive. Most importantly, the Trust was endowed with the first and only legislative investment of $6 million.

One of the most enjoyable experiences of a journey is the ability to share it with a partner.

To ensure the success of the Trust, Deborah Bonito, plus several other community visionaries, formed a non-government sister organization – Friends of the Alaska Children’s Trust (FACT) — that would further promote and support the work of ACT and help build the endowment. In partnership, they invested millions across the state, grew the endowment, and raised awareness of the issue.

An important part of any journey is taking a moment to pause and reflect on where you have been, and thoughtfully consider where to go next. This moment came in 2006, when ACT and FACT acknowledged that the number of children experiencing trauma only seemed to be growing and the types of trauma getting worse. ACT and FACT were created to change these trends but seemed to have little effect, causing the organizations to have some of the hardest conversations to determine the best direction to head. The result was a very challenging chapter in our journey, but one that led us to our most pivotal moment in our 30 years – the merging of ACT with FACT to become a single non-governmental nonprofit organization.

With each new road we take on our journey, our mission and our drive has never wavered — together we can prevent child abuse and neglect.

Today, as an independent nonprofit, we are equipped with greater resources, stronger partners, and new options and opportunities. The trend can be turned back and must be turned back. We must safeguard the future of our state and society by doing everything possible to provide better lives for Alaskan children and families. All Alaskan children deserve to grow up in safe, stable and nurturing communities.

During our 30-year journey, we have learned there is no single solution that will resolve this complex issue. To effectively reverse this epidemic, we must deploy efforts that are consistent, coordinated, sustainable and strategic. We must also remind ourselves that real change and prevention takes time.

Alaska Children’s Trust works in a variety of ways to create change. This report shares stories of hope, celebrates the impact of your investments and reflects three decades of commitment to Alaska’s children. Your investment in Alaska’s children is making a difference. You are impacting children, parents and communities across the state. You are building awareness and leveraging the voices of kids through advocacy. You are building resiliency in youth through afterschool care and reducing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). You are providing resources and grants to organizations closest to the need that directly impact kids and families on a daily basis. You are ensuring critical research continues so we can understand the breadth and depth of the issue. You are providing hope and healing to Alaskan children and families.

We continue our journey always keeping in mind our destination: the place where child abuse and neglect is far from memory.

We thank you for joining us in this effort. We will continue to work tirelessly, and with your continued investments in solutions and sustainable prevention, together we will create safe, stable, nurturing communities for Alaska’s children and families. There is no better investment.

On behalf of the ACT board of directors, staff, donors and volunteers, thank you for your continued support.

Together we will prevent child abuse and neglect.

Rep. Ivy Spohnholz Trevor Storrs
Board Chair President & CEO
New Funding, New Hope for Afterschool Programs

In Alaska, there are 25,000 children enrolled in afterschool care, and another 45,000 children who want to be in a program — but can’t.

Out of these two children, which one would you say has a lower risk of getting involved in unhealthy behaviors, like substance abuse? If you said the child in the afterschool program, you would be right. Researchers found that students who participate in an afterschool program at least two days a week are 18 percent less likely to use alcohol and 39 percent less likely to use marijuana.

But here’s the challenge. In Alaska, there are currently 25,000 children enrolled in afterschool care, and another 45,000 children who want to be in a program, but can’t because the programs are full, cost-prohibitive — or simply don’t exist.

These statistics were unacceptable to a group including the Alaska Afterschool Network, Boys & Girls Clubs Alaska, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Kenai Peninsula, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, and a group of Alaska legislators, which joined forces to champion a bill establishing the Marijuana Education and Treatment Fund. The bill, which successfully passed both the House and Senate earlier this year, will direct 25 percent of Alaska’s new marijuana sales tax revenue to the fund. Half of that revenue will directly benefit Alaska’s youth by increasing access to afterschool programs statewide through a newly established grant program.

Jennifer Yeoman can share firsthand about how important afterschool programs are to Alaska families. In addition to her six children, Jennifer has cared for many foster children over the years.

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Kenai Peninsula is just one program that can speak to the critical need for funding. They closed their Homer Club in 2013 due to funding shortages and lack of program space, and their Soldotna Club has a waiting list of 85 kids.

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Boys & Girls Clubs has been beyond helpful for all our foster children we have had over the years. We could not have provided the care as a foster family without the help from Boys & Girls Club,” she says. “Having a safe place for your children to go for a few hours after school helps more than I can speak to.”

And now, with support from the new grant program, more Alaska families will have just that.

Read more of Jennifer’s story at alaskachildrenstrust.org

Building Resilience through History and Hope

In Alaska, we have our own culture and pride about being Alaskan. There is strong culture and knowledge to learn from.

Another pilot presentation was offered in Fairbanks at the Alaska Native Education program, which serves students in grades K-12. “It was the first time many staff had heard about ACEs,” says Yatibaey Evans, program director. “Having their eyes opened to the (ACEs) study and how trauma affects kids is helpful to understanding and building compassion and empathy. It increased their open arms, made them wider.”

LaVerne Demientieff, clinical associate professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, was closely involved in the development of History and Hope and is also one of the curriculum facilitators. “My hope for the curriculum is that we build compassion, connection, ceremony and curiosity,” she shares. “Part of the understanding of the impacts of trauma is being more compassionate. You’re less likely to place blame and more likely to understand that something happened to this person.”

Learn more about how History and Hope is changing lives at alaskachildrenstrust.org.
These kids aren’t hungry to learn—they’re just hungry. 20 percent of Alaska’s kids live in households where there is not enough food.

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ey morning, children arrive at schools across Alaska with empty bellies. Some haven’t had enough breakfast—or any at all. Others haven’t eaten since they left school the previous day. These kids aren’t hungry to learn—they’re just hungry.

The 2018 KIDS COUNT Alaska Economic Well-Being Report tells us that 20 percent of Alaska’s kids live in households where there is not enough food. While data like this doesn’t put food on the table, it does provide the information decision-makers need to implement efforts to address the problem.

Data plays a huge role at schools like Anchorage’s Willow Crest Elementary, which offers a free breakfast and lunch program to 100 percent of its students.

“Schools receive the free meals through their having a high number of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch,” explains Kristina Peterson, who served as Willow Crest principal for eight years. “Students qualify based on the income level of the family. When a school has a high level of students qualifying, the entire student population can be provided the free meals.

The importance of data is why Voices for Alaska’s Children became the Alaska KIDS COUNT partner in 2016. KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is the premier source for data on child and family well-being in Alaska and throughout the United States. The mission of KIDS COUNT is to ensure child advocates, policymakers and the public have access to high-quality, unbiased data about child well-being.

One of the noteworthy aspects of KIDS COUNT is that it uses the same measurements to compare Alaska to other state and national data sets, including economic well-being, education, health, family and community, and overall child well-being.

For example, the 2018 KIDS COUNT Alaska Economic Well-Being Report shows that 56 percent of Alaska’s children are living in poverty—significantly above the national average of 19 percent.

“It compares apples to apples,” says Andrew Cutting, who oversees KIDS COUNT Alaska. “It makes shocking numbers even more shocking.”

By demonstrating Alaska’s disproportionately high numbers, the data underscores the need for a shift in strategy. “If you keep going the same path, you are going to get the same results,” Andrew says. “When you change your outlook and try new things, you’ll get better outcomes.”

Back at Willow Crest and other schools across the state, data continues to drive decisions to benefit students and their families. “When you know your child is safe and being cared for, it opens the doors for you to do the things you need to do to help support your family,” Kristina says.

Find out more about how KIDS COUNT data is driving change at alaskachildrenstrust.org.

W
e aren’t born with parenting knowledge, and as any parent will tell you, the job doesn’t come with an instruction manual. But even the most basic knowledge can make an enormous difference in raising happy, healthy children and reducing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which research has shown can lead to many future lifelong problems, including poorer mental health, physical health, and socioeconomic status in adulthood.

O’Malley—a mother of four—and other young moms gained a wealth of parenting knowledge through Covenant House Alaska’s Parent Resiliency Project over the past year. The project, which Alaska Children’s Trust helped fund with a $10,000 grant, delivered a series of parenting workshops to current and former residents of Passage House, which is Covenant House’s transitional living program for young women who are pregnant or parenting.

The workshops explored in-depth parenting skills in a group setting, with a goal to increase parental awareness, examine the effects of one’s own trauma and ACEs on their children, and build a strong support network of peers.

“My biggest hope is that we are preventing ACEs in children through this process of creating parents who are aware of trauma and prevent it whenever possible,” says Gena Graves, Passage House program coordinator.

“In 20 years, my hope is we have young adults without ACEs because their parents were knowledgeable and had the skills.”

“Everyone can learn more. Even the best parent can learn more because everyone is different,” shares O’Malley, who connected with Passage House a little over five years ago, when she was pregnant with her first child.

Perhaps the most positive outcomes Gena witnessed over the year were the connections the mothers made with each other, and the knowledge and confidence they gained. “Over the year, we saw them become more engaged in parenting. They gained a lot of confidence and felt more knowledgeable,” Gena says. In a post-project survey, the mothers indicated that 95 percent had greater resilience as a parent, 97 percent had more positive parenting attitudes, 97 percent increased their knowledge of ACEs and resilience, and 100 percent built connections.

“The different topics and information on different stages definitely helped me become a better parent,” O’Malley shares. “I can understand my kids better and know how to parent my kids at different levels and in good ways.”

Read more about O’Malley’s journey at alaskachildrenstrust.org.
Community Investments with ImpACT

Alaska Children’s Trust believes that together, we can prevent child abuse and neglect. In 2018, we granted $317,552 to organizations across Alaska to support programs benefiting Alaskan children and families. In our 30th anniversary year, we thank and acknowledge all partners who work tirelessly on prevention efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect in our state.

STATEWIDE
- Alaska Afterschool Network
- Alaska Community Foundations
- Alaska Comprehensive Healthcare Blueprint
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
- Alaska Department of Juvenile Justice
- Alaska Fundraising Professionals
- Alaska Public Health Association
- Alaska Resilience Initiative
- All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
- Children’s Lunch Box
- Covenant House
- Facing Foster Care in Alaska
- First Alaskans Elders & Youth Conference
- Keys to Life
- Maternal Child Health Conference
- My Grandma’s House
- Perseverance Theatre
- SERRC
- Spirit of Youth
- State of Alaska – ACEs Convening
- Stone Soup Group
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- United Way of Anchorage
- United Way of Mat-Su
- Voices for Alaska’s Children – KIDS

COUNT Alaska

NORTHERN
- Nome Community Center
- Resource Center for Parents & Children

SOUTHCENTRAL
- Beacon Hill
- Christian Health Associates
- Covenant House
- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
- Old Harbor Alliance

SOUTHEAST
- Center for Community
- Riverbend Elementary School

In addition to these specific grants and communities, many of our investments support programs, conferences and initiatives touching multiple areas statewide.

See the full list of community investments at alaskachildrenstrust.org.

In 2018, ACT granted $317,552 to organizations across Alaska.

Financials

Alaska Children’s Trust receives support from private foundations, government, corporations, and individual donors allowing us to work toward achieving our mission to prevent child abuse and neglect. ACT’s fiscal year runs January to December. The following graphs outline our activities for the most completed and audited fiscal year: January – December 2017.

REVENUE & SUPPORT
- FOUNDATIONS $609,405
- GOVERNMENT GRANTS $31,150
- INVESTMENT INCOME $400,000
- INDIVIDUAL & CORPORATE GIVING $215,975
- OTHER $28,310

PROGRAMS
- COMMUNITY OF HOPE $167,329
- GRANTS $224,147
- GENERAL OUTREACH & EDUCATION $30,392
- ALASKA RESILIENCE INITIATIVE $278,725
- ALASKA AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK $170,076
- VOICES FOR ALASKA’S CHILDREN $425,705

ACTIVITIES
- FUNDRAISING $98,343
- MANAGEMENT & GENERAL $209,815
- PROGRAM $1,296,374

ENDOWMENT

ACT has partnered with the Alaska Community Foundation since 2010 to manage our endowment. As of June 2018, the endowment was valued at $12,317,405.
Donor Honor Roll

$100,000+  
Annie E. Casey Foundation  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
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State of Alaska Dept. of Health & Social Services  
The David & Lucile Packard Foundation

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$25,000 - $49,999  
Mat-Su Health Foundation  
State of Alaska Dept. of Education & Early Development

$10,000 - $24,999  
Alaska Community Foundation  
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Wells Fargo

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Thank You

We account for, acknowledge and steward our donors from October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018.  
Although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, we acknowledge that errors may have occurred.  
If you have identified a misplaced or misspelled your name, please contact Julia Martinez at 907-266-7676 or jmartineh@alaskachildren.org

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MISSION
TO IMPROVE THE STATUS OF CHILDREN IN ALASKA
BY GENERATING FUNDS AND COMMITTING RESOURCES
TO ELIMINATE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT.