

CONNECTS

CASEY

FALL 2003
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE: Helping Immigrant and Refugee Families Not Just Survive, but Thrive; Influence of National Family Week Increasing; Shedding Light on the Charitable Giving Act; Resource Corner; INSITES



SUSE FITZHUGH

HELPING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES NOT JUST SURVIVE, BUT THRIVE

“What I like about America is that the government at least helps you,” a 31-year-old Oromo woman says about life after her immigration to the United States from an East African refugee camp. She complains though, that she is not treated with respect because she cannot speak English well. She worries about learning the language, adapting to a new culture, and her children. “It is difficult to parent here,” she says. “They are much more American than we are, and it is difficult to get them to listen to us and to value our culture.”

One woman’s frustrations are echoed throughout communities in the United States with a high influx of immigrant populations hailing from Southeast Asia to Latin America. One in five children in the United States is the child of an immigrant,

making them the fastest growing segment of the population under age 18. As an organization dedicated to improving children’s lives, virtually every facet of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s work is touched—and enriched—by the challenge of serving immigrant families effectively and maximizing their unique strengths. In efforts ranging from child welfare to health to system reform to community mobilization, the Foundation and its grantees are grappling with these issues and putting in place targeted strategies.

According to the National Survey of America’s Families conducted by the Urban Institute, “Immigrants play a crucial role in the U.S. economy, comprising almost one in eight workers and one in four low-wage workers. They fill critical jobs and are the backbone of many industries.” While many immigrants are low-income, “prosperous immigrant communities represent

untapped markets for a wide range of businesses, including banks and retail stores, and underutilized sources of voluntarism or other forms of civic engagement,” the study notes. Many immigrants also bring advanced degrees and bilingual skills.

While the sheer number of dollars immigrant workers send back home demonstrates their work ethic and earning potential—total remittance flows nearly doubled from \$34 billion in 1990 to \$66 billion in 2000 by conservative World

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

[Vietnamese teenagers tutor younger children at the Van-Lang Vietnamese Cultural School in Seattle/White Center.](#)

INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK INCREASING

If you wandered the grounds of the new Riverfront Library in Yonkers, N.Y., on November 8, you would have seen parents, children, and members of the community trying out aerobics, dance, karate, and yoga classes; perusing donated books; and learning about cooking in healthy eating

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

workshops. You would have come across parents and kids building birdhouses, learning about bike and automobile safety, and enjoying a free and nutritious lunch together. You also would have found local leaders, town councilmen, the mayor, and state representatives meeting with members of neighborhood groups and affirming their commitment to policies and programs that support the needs of families and communities.

The much anticipated fifth annual Family Day celebration in Yonkers was expected to draw an even greater crowd than the 2,000 participants and 200 volunteers who helped make last year's event such a success. And it is just one of more than 170 events taking place on village greens and at state capitols around the country during National Family Week, November 23–29, and throughout the month, with the goal of building strong children, families, and communities by honoring the individuals, businesses, organizations, and policymakers that help them thrive.

“Ours is a one-day event where parents and children come to have a good time with each other and learn about family-friendly businesses, programs, and services in the area that they can use,” explained Lorelei Vargas, director of Policy, Planning, and Research at the Julia Dyckman Andrus Memorial, the lead agency for the Yonkers Early Childhood Initiative, which organizes the event. “It’s also a time for local and state leaders to get a grassroots look at issues that affect people and take part in



JOAN JENNINGS

Parents and children at the Greyston Childcare Center in Yonkers sang the national anthem at the opening ceremony of last year's Family Day.

conversations about what makes strong families and strong communities.”

National Family Week has been sponsored for more than three decades by the Alliance for Children and Families, a Milwaukee-based organization that represents child- and family-serving organizations working with nearly 8 million people in 6,700 communities. With Casey Foundation support, National Family Week has grown over the past three years from a small program involving fewer than 50 members into a nationwide happening involving 20,000 people.

Thanks to partnerships forged by the Alliance and the Foundation, an increasing number of national nonprofit organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, American Association of Retired Persons, National League of Cities, and YMCA of America, also are promoting National Family Week and encouraging their local chapters and constituents to participate.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE CHARITABLE GIVING ACT

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has been closely monitoring developments in proposed legislation designed to stimulate charitable giving through changes to the federal tax code. The Charitable Giving Act (HR 7), passed by the House in September, has received extensive media coverage and the attention of the philanthropic community because of its potential effect on private foundations and the many grantees that rely on their support.

After House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO) and Representative Harold Ford (D-TN) introduced the bill last May, Casey Foundation President Doug Nelson sent a letter to the Foundation's network of grantees, partners, and friends to clarify the details of the measure and the Foundation's position.

"It is certainly appropriate for Congress to encourage maximum, practical payouts by foundations, and to discourage excessive compensation for executives and trustees. However, the legislation, as proposed, may have unintended consequences beyond the worthy goals that Congress has anticipated," wrote Nelson.

The Charitable Giving Act attempts to increase the dollars going to grantees by excluding "administrative expenses" from the annual required payout of 5 percent of a private foundation's total assets. The Casey Foundation's main concern is that

the exclusion of these expenses might discourage some foundations from considering important grantee-supporting activities like technical and communications assistance, program evaluation, training, and leadership development.

For example, the annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* is distributed to thousands of grantees, child advocates, legislators, journalists, academics, and others to help them better understand the issues that have an impact on children's lives. The Foundation has been able to make resources go further by combining the KIDS COUNT grants with technical assistance and other types of direct staff support—costs that could be considered administrative in the new legislation.

While the Casey Foundation has a policy interest in this issue, planned spending will not be affected by this debate. Historically, the Foundation has paid out more than the required 5 percent, spending more than 7 percent in five of the past six years, and we estimate that the 2003 payout will be just as high.

The House Ways and Means Committee considered the issue of administrative expenses in a markup session of HR 7 in early September. Incorporating feedback from leaders in the nonprofit community, Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) amended the original legislation including a signifi-

cant compromise allowing expenses attributable to direct charitable activities, grant selection activities, grant monitoring, and administration activities to qualify toward the minimum 5 percent payout requirement.

Other key provisions of interest to private foundations, including measures to prevent excessive compensation for executives and trustees, were also passed. In addition, Rep. Thomas's version of HR 7 adjusts the excise tax on private foundations' net investment income and increases penalties for self-dealing violations.

The revised bill is expected to go before House and Senate conference committees along with the CARE Act, the Senate's counterpart to HR 7, before the end of the year. In addition to working out differences between the two bills, the committees must determine how the costs of proposed tax breaks included in HR 7—expected to reach \$12.7 billion over ten years—would be covered.

Regardless of how this issue is resolved, the Casey Foundation will work closely with grantees, consultants, co-investors, and strategic partners and continue its ongoing commitment to use the best combination of grants, technical assistance, and direct services to improve outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable kids and families.



LOUISVILLE HOSTS BOARD MEETING

Dana Jackson, Louisville *Making Connections* site coordinator, helped organize a site visit for the Casey Foundation Board of Trustees in August. The Board had the opportunity to meet with local officials, neighborhood leaders, and community residents. To Jackson's left, Kevin Fields with the Louisville Urban League; to her right, Joe Gliessner of New Directions Housing Corporation and Luckett Davidson of the Louisville Community Design Center.

HELPING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES NOT JUST SURVIVE, BUT THRIVE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Bank estimates—many immigrant families are stymied from building on their assets by a lack of access to mainstream services and institutions. They also fall prey to predatory financial services and inflated fees for transactions that cut into the spending power of their hard-earned dollars.

Through the Foundation's Family Economic Success initiative, immigrant families learn to protect their assets and build strong financial futures for themselves and their children. "The problem is not just being able to get and keep a job, but having opportunities to move ahead with a career and build wealth," says Bob Giloth, the Foundation's director of Family Economic Success.

Denver, one of the cities in the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative, is attempting to create "hybrid neighborhoods in which the Spanish-speaking population can tap into the same resources as the Americans," notes Garland Yates, *Making Connections* site team leader for Denver. The site has forged a partnership with a credit union to provide financial services to the immigrant sector without the remittance fees that predatory lenders would charge. "With a checking or savings account, and less money lost to fees, they are able to save more and even send some home to their families," Yates notes.

The Hmong Educational Advancement (HEA) program in Wisconsin helps support the financial needs of Southeast Asian families in Milwaukee. Dao Veng, site coordinator for HEA, tells of two Hmong parents who had been paying to have their taxes prepared. After visiting HEA's Voluntary Income Tax Assistance center, they had their returns amended for the previous three years and were able to get more than \$3,400 in education credit for their two children attending college. "For many families, \$3,000 is enough for

a down payment on their first home—the first step toward asset building," notes Veng.

While some indicators of child well-being favor children of immigrant parents—more are being raised in two-parent families, for example—they are more than twice as likely as other children to be in poor health. Covering Kids & Families,

tuberculosis but eventually expanding to meet other family needs. The program started in Seattle and currently is being replicated in Boston, San Diego, and Washington, D.C. "We try to understand the particular culture and health beliefs of each ethnic group we work with," says Patrick Chaulk, MD, senior associate for health programs at the Foundation.

VIRTUALLY every facet of the Casey Foundation's work is TOUCHED—and ENRICHED—by the challenge of serving immigrant families effectively and maximizing their UNIQUE STRENGTHS.

an initiative of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, is designed to reduce the number of uninsured children and families by enrolling and retaining eligible children in the state's Medicaid health insurance program called RItE Care. The Central Falls project, one of three local project communities, offers a wide variety of social service programs specifically geared toward Latinos. The project uses multiple forms of bilingual and bicultural outreach, including Spanish language newspapers, radio call-in shows, and referral networks to dispel myths about eligibility requirements and increase the number of RItE Care applicants.

Another effort to improve health services for immigrant and refugee families is the Cultural Case Managers program developed by the Foundation. The program draws on data from the target population to design culturally acceptable approaches to services and care, focusing initially on

"We use the knowledge, talent, and skills within the community as part of a larger trust-building exercise."

Refugee families involved in the child welfare system also have special needs that too often aren't addressed. Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS), a national program operated by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services, held a roundtable in July 2003 to help broaden collaboration among service providers and better support refugee children in public foster care. "The roundtable exposed national leaders in child welfare to the concerns of refugee community members and service providers, while giving refugee community leaders tools and strategies for working with their local child welfare systems," notes Kerry McCarthy, program coordinator of BRYCS.

RESOURCE CORNER

In Print

All publications listed below can be ordered from the Foundation website (www.aecf.org) or by calling our publications voice line at 410.223.2890, unless otherwise noted.

• **THE NEW NEIGHBORS: A USER'S GUIDE TO DATA ON IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. COMMUNITIES**—This guidebook was designed to help advocates, local policymakers, and program leaders identify immigrant populations in their local communities and take stock of their characteristics, contributions, and needs. *The New Neighbors*, prepared by the Urban Institute with support from the Casey Foundation, provides information from the U.S. Census and other sources to help address key questions about immigrants' adaptation to and involvement in local economies and social institutions.

• **VOICES FROM THE EMPOWERMENT ZONES: INSIGHTS ABOUT LAUNCHING LARGE-SCALE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION INITIATIVES**—This report, written by Janet Levy of the EZ/EC Foundation Consortium and Mark Joseph of Community Development Associates, offers an insider's look at what it's like living and working in seven Empowerment Zone communities. The report combines provocative insights and observations from residents with inspirational photos taken by young people in EZ/EC neighborhoods.

• **UPDATE: LATEST FINDINGS IN CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**—Designed for policymakers, advocates, clinicians, and anyone committed to the well-being of children, this quarterly bulletin is produced through a collabo-

ration between Rutgers University, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Casey Foundation. Each edition highlights an aspect of children's mental health, with findings based on a landmark national survey of over 8,000 youth in some 1,600 community mental health facilities. The Summer 2003 report focuses on adolescents living in residential care programs.

• **2003 KIDS COUNT AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND LATINO CHILDREN POCKET GUIDES**—These two new KIDS COUNT guides offer data on the economic, educational, and social well-being of minority children and highlight persistent gaps between minority children and non-Hispanic white children in the United States. Derived from the 2000 Census, these booklets provide a national overview, state-by-state data, and state rankings.

• **SHIFTING INTO GEAR: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO CREATING A CAR OWNERSHIP PROGRAM**—One of the most persistent but often overlooked barriers to employment for low-income families is not having a car. The National Economic Development and Law Center published this resource with Casey Foundation support to help organizations interested in launching or improving car ownership programs for low-income communities. This report offers guidelines on program feasibility, design, and strategies as well as sample forms, surveys, and references.

• **NEW SONG ACADEMY**—This report by Prudence Brown and Leila Fiester presents a compelling portrait of education reform through the struggles and successes of the New Song Academy, an inner-city community school and Casey Foundation grantee. The report highlights the school's

achievements, challenges, and lessons learned about factors that support or undermine education in poor but revitalizing communities.

• **ADVOCASEY: SPRING 2003**—This issue of the Casey Foundation's periodical documenting programs that work for kids and families highlights challenges facing America's juvenile courts and corrections systems. In the opening essay, Foundation President Doug Nelson decries the trend toward "fad justice" for teens, and the magazine explores four crucial choices facing the juvenile justice field. Also included are stories tracking the progress of a juvenile detention reform effort in New Mexico and the success of Missouri's "small is beautiful" approach to youth corrections.

On the Web

www.gcir.org/aecf, a special portal to the website of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR), offers a wealth of immigrant and refugee data at the international, state, and county levels as well as a newsletter, bibliography, and resources on everything from health, education, employment, and public benefits to leadership development. GCIR, which does not give grants but helps funding groups work together and better target their assistance to meet diverse immigrant and refugee needs, also offers a listserv highlighting new reports, policy updates, and key events.

The Casey Foundation has revamped and expanded a section of its website devoted to *Making Connections*, a multi-city, multiyear effort to help children by strengthening their families and neighborhoods. The site, www.aecf.org/mc, offers information, resources, and examples of what is working in *Making Connections* sites.



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INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK INCREASING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

This year, nearly 100 Alliance members and more than 70 local organizations are joining forces to provide fun and entertainment while connecting families to the resources they need and introducing them to community, school, and other local and state leaders. National Family Week also serves as a forum for political leaders and policymakers to underscore their commitment to helping families achieve the foundations of success through decent jobs, quality child care, transportation, education and training, affordable health care and housing, child abuse prevention and treatment, and school readiness.

Casey Foundation support also has enabled the Alliance to step up its outreach efforts, resulting in a 67 percent increase in media coverage from 2001–2002 and growing corporate sponsorship.

“In the past three years, we’ve been better able to help Alliance members form true partnerships with local nonprofits in order to plan truly meaningful events,” explained Paula Purcell, the Alliance’s director of Special Projects. “This enables them not only to create activities that bring families together, but also to educate them about what services are available in their communities and connect them with policymakers.”

For more information, go to www.nationalfamilyweek.org.



INSPIRATION BY EXAMPLE

Geoffrey Canada, noted author and activist and chief executive officer of the Harlem Children’s Zone, offered inspirational remarks at a recent gathering of 2003 honorees in the FAMILIES COUNT: National Honors Program, which recognizes community organizations doing an exemplary job of strengthening families and communities. Canada’s most recent book is *Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America*. The Harlem Children’s Zone, formerly known as Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families, is a 2001 FAMILIES COUNT honoree.