



SOUTHERN GOOD FAITH FUND
PINE BLUFF, AR

FAMILIES COUNT celebrates Southern Good Faith Fund, one of four organizations recognized in 2007 for helping America's most vulnerable children have what they need most: strong, capable and economically successful families.



MOVING FAMILIES FORWARD

In the rural communities of the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta, low-income parents have a tough time creating the life they want for their families. Since 1988, the innovative Southern Good Faith Fund (SGFF) has helped thousands of parents develop the skills, self-confidence and economic stability to change this picture and move their families forward.

“Everything we do is geared toward helping families achieve their own American dream, whether it’s buying a house, going to college, starting a business—or all of the above,” says President Angela Duran.



SGFF works closely with families to identify their life goals and then supports them every step of the way through four programs: Asset Builders, the Business Development Center, Career Pathways and Public Policy.

In Asset Builders, families not only develop new resources through matched savings in Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), but also learn how to protect those savings and make them grow. Workshops on budgeting, credit repair, investing and home ownership turn even small beginnings into tangible gains. Through a special SGFF program, families start saving in similar IDAs, called SEED accounts, for their preschoolers' college and other goals.

SGFF's Business Development Center gives entrepreneurs support in launching or expanding a business as one strategy to create a financial foundation for their families. In one year alone, over 800 participants found technical assistance, workshops on management and planning, and access to financing. In the process, many of them brought new services into low-income neighborhoods and created new jobs for other parents.

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER

PATHWAYS TO ECONOMIC SUCCESS In an unusual partnership with employers and community colleges, SGFF helps parents follow career pathways to higher earnings, better benefits and career advancement.

"The Career Pathways program guides each parent to form goals based on his or her skills, interests and education," says Duran. To keep training relevant, SGFF and community colleges bring together employers in high-demand fields such as health care, education and manufacturing to identify the core competencies required at each job level. Community colleges then create the education programs to support parents in developing these competencies as they advance. Because of this careful groundwork, courses and jobs reinforce each other and lead to the next level of responsibility. More than 80 percent of Career Pathways graduates, some 800 to date, have gone on to employment or continuing degree programs. Thanks to such positive outcomes, SGFF has worked with the state, which has invested \$16 million, to replicate the Career Pathways model at 10 additional two-year colleges throughout Arkansas.

As families use all these supports to succeed, SGFF learns from their achievements to advocate for changes in public policy. "We build our programs to help families one by one," says Duran. "But we also look for lessons that will help us strengthen families statewide and nationwide."

BUILDING A BETTER LIFE

Just a few years ago, the dream of owning a home felt out of reach to Thomas and Tisha Arnold. Their credit was shaky, student loans and bills were piling up, and their first child was on the way. Then they found out about SGFF's Asset Builders.

"When you're making an hourly wage, you don't hear about investing in yourself," says Tisha. "You don't see how putting \$20 a month in a matching fund adds up over time. But when you learn how it works and fulfill your savings goals, you make wiser decisions. It opens a new world."

Through Asset Builders, the Arnolds opened Individual Development Accounts and started saving diligently. Classes in money management also helped bring them closer to their goal. By the time their second daughter arrived, the Arnolds had started looking for their first house. Today they are proud homeowners—and they're passing on the lessons they've learned.

"We're already teaching our five-year-old daughter about money, and we're planning to enroll both children in the savings program," says Thomas. "We want to get them started early so they can do even better than we did."

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WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES



“Our families and partners trust us because we get results.

They see how we're helping people improve their lives. That gives us the

credibility to effect change on an even wider scale.”

—Angela Duran, President, Southern Good Faith Fund

FAMILIES COUNT: THE NATIONAL HONORS PROGRAM

celebrates organizations that improve the odds for vulnerable children by helping them have what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families.

The 50 organizations honored since the program began in 2000 connect families to the resources, supports and opportunities they need to succeed. FAMILIES COUNT honorees provide compelling evidence that we can change the outcomes for children in some of the nation's toughest communities when we build on their families' strengths.

Millions of low-income families continue to find it extremely difficult to get by and get ahead, even as they work harder and longer than ever before. Their communities too often lack the most basic elements that allow parents to fulfill family aspirations: strong social networks, good schools, safe streets, responsive services, affordable housing, and jobs that provide adequate support and opportunities for advancement.

These families are not without hope because they are not without champions—the people and organizations working side by side with them every day. The FAMILIES COUNT honorees remind us that the continuing challenge for our nation is less about know-how than it is about will—the willingness to care enough and do enough so that all families can realize their dreams for their children.

2007 HONOREES

ECD/HOPE (Enterprise Corporation of the Delta/ Hope Community Credit Union), Jackson, MS

Family Service Association of San Antonio, Inc., San Antonio, TX

Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Washington, DC

Southern Good Faith Fund, Pine Bluff, AR

To learn about previous honorees, please visit www.aecf.org

Cover photo © Bob Daemmrch: At SGFF's Business Development Center, entrepreneurs learn ways to start and grow their own businesses. Pictured from left: Danielle Jackson, Allyson Hay, Oscar Bullard, Latisha Bullard, Cherrie Bradley and Abraham Moore.

Interior photo © Bob Daemmrch: The Arnold family, Thomas, Tisha and their two daughters, Aiyana (left) and Tahlia, gathers in front of the home they bought with help from SGFF's Asset Builders program.