

EVENT NEWS

# Soup Sunday: So nice, we host it twice!



Ask anyone. Soup Sunday is one of THE MOST FUN events in Arkansas. The atmosphere is “souper” casual and family-friendly, the food is always delicious, and the cause most important – the future of Arkansas’s kids. We even won the Arkansas Times Best Charity Event, two years in a row!

**Northwest Arkansas Soup Sunday** is February 18 at the Rogers Convention Center from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. Co-chairs Jess and Clint Schaff and their committee are creating an event that will include unBOWLievable soups, a rockin’ Kid Zone, and the nicest people in Northwest Arkansas. New this year: a DESSERT auction with delicacies from local bakeries. Soup’s On!  
**Central Arkansas Soup Sunday** is happening on March 10 at The Venue at Westwind in North Little Rock from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. Co-chairs (and AACF board members)

Shannon Collier-Tenison and Danyelle Walker are leading an engaged volunteer committee making SOUPER plans for this year’s event. Our featured chef will be James Hale of Allsopp & Chapple.

**Sponsorships and tickets: aradvocates.org/events**  
Proceeds from both events support AACF’s mission to ensure that all Arkansas children and their families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives.

Want to support Soup Sunday using your Donor Advised Fund? We can help! Call and we’ll provide a quick summary of the tax deductible portion of your sponsorship and the fair market value of your tickets, no matter what level of sponsorship you’re considering.

## Donate to Support Advocacy



Scan the QR code to donate

Visit [www.aradvocates.org/donate](http://www.aradvocates.org/donate)

Text ADVOCATE to 243725

Make a larger impact with a gift of stock or transfer from your IRA

Donate through a Donor Advised Fund

Help us plan for the future by including a bequest to AACF in your estate plans

Fran Carter  
501-454-5014

Missy Darwin Kincaid  
479-466-0771

### ROUND UP TO GIVE

If you’re a Walmart shopper, you can donate to AACF by rounding up to the nearest dollar when you check out online or via the Walmart app! Simply select Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families as your charity of choice. Every penny counts!

**The year’s not over yet. All new and increased gifts received in 2023 will be matched!**

# Advocacy Matters



IN THIS ISSUE:  
Giving Tuesday  
Event Photos

Staff Spotlight: Laura Kellams

## Child advocacy needs all of us

How are we doing, Arkansas?

Can we say that all our families are well fed? That all our children are well-educated and living in safe, stable housing? That we drive down nicely paved roads, and everyone can get the health care they need when they need it?

Arkansas is not there.

During the 2023 General Assembly, many bills were not considered because of concerns about costs. There were proposals that could have helped improve access to and the quality of our early child-care system, which is critical to getting workers to work. There were bills that could have helped address the rising costs of diapers and formula. Or made wheelchair-accessible vehicles more attainable for people with mobility issues. We could have expanded Medicaid coverage for new moms to address our state’s alarming mortality rate.

Other investments that we know Arkansas needs:

- Expanding broadband access
- Eliminating food deserts and related hunger issues
- Providing substance abuse services
- Expanding community-based programs for youth
- Meeting the increasing need for mental health services
- Providing health insurance for uninsured children

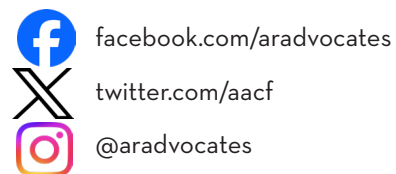
“The state budget is a reflection of our values. If we want our communities to thrive, we need to take a more active role in making the economy stronger for every Arkansan,” commented Keesa Smith, AACF’s Executive Director. “We should take a hard look at our state and its needs and determine if we can truly say that we are meeting them.”

### DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know? Coalitions are working together to make Arkansas better for children and families. We work with partners from across Arkansas that focus on healthy children and productive families. These are some of the coalitions the staff at AACF are currently engaged in supporting:

- Arkansas Coalition for Strong Families
- Arkansas Collective Impact for Democracy
- Arkansas Kids Count Coalition
- Excel by 8

### Be Social



## Join us. Donate. Vote. Advocate.

Your year-end gift helps AACF advocate for spending our state’s money where it is most needed – helping Arkansas children and families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives and to realize their full potential.

Make the choice today to be an advocate.

**Giving Tuesday is Nov. 28**





## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

### AACF Issue Areas

AACF focuses on key issue areas to help improve child well-being in Arkansas.

- Child welfare
- Economic security
- Early childhood and K-12 education
- Health care
- Hunger
- Immigrant children and families
- Juvenile justice
- Racial equity
- Tax and budget

### AACF 2023 Board of Directors

- Xochitl Delgado Solorzano, Incoming President
- Sheldon Riklon, MD, Secretary
- Shannon Collier-Tenison, PhD, Treasurer
- Martie North, At-Large Member
- Rejena S. Grotjohn, JD, At-Large Member
- Nikki Edge, PhD
- Hershey Garner, JD, MD
- Tamara P. Glover, PhD
- Gene Lu, MD
- Susan Sullivan Miller, MD
- Brooke Montgomery, PhD
- Rev. Natasha Murray-Norman
- Chad Rodgers, MD
- William Schwab, PhD
- Jurena Storm
- Aaron Strong, MD
- Stacey Sturner, JD
- Pastor Dwight Townsend
- Danyelle Walker, JD

## Laura Kellams

### Northwest Arkansas Director

Laura Kellams joined AACF as its first Northwest Arkansas director in 2008. In this role, she works to call attention to challenges facing children in the region and to build support for policy solutions that can help all children thrive. Before joining Advocates, she was a newspaper reporter for 15 years, mostly covering politics and government for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. During that time, she served as a journalism fellow on the staff of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee as part of the American Political Science Association's Congressional Fellowship Program.



She is a longtime board member of the Economic Opportunity Agency of Washington County as well as the League of Women Voters. She is a past recipient of the Georgetown Center for Children and Families' national "Bulldog of the Year" award for her advocacy to extend health coverage to immigrant children in Arkansas. Laura and her husband Kyle have lived in Fayetteville for more than 30 years.

## 15 Years in Northwest AR!

Nearly 200 friends gathered to celebrate 15 years of our Northwest Arkansas office and to recognize the leadership of Northwest Arkansas Director Laura Kellams. We presented Laura with an original work by local artist Aaron Bleidt. Guests heard from former board chair Lynn Carver, AACF Executive Director Keesa Smith, Incoming Board President Xochitl Delgado Solorzano, and Peggy Bailey with our national partner Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

At the event, Development Director Missy Darwin Kincaid announced that Jane Hunt has made a three-year commitment totaling \$300,000 to AACF, which is the largest single gift from an individual to the organization. Missy also shared that we have exceeded the \$100,000 matching gift from Denton and Cathy Seilhan. And Missy recognized Jill and Tom King for their estate gift and encouraged others to join them in this legacy.

## 2023 Friends of Children

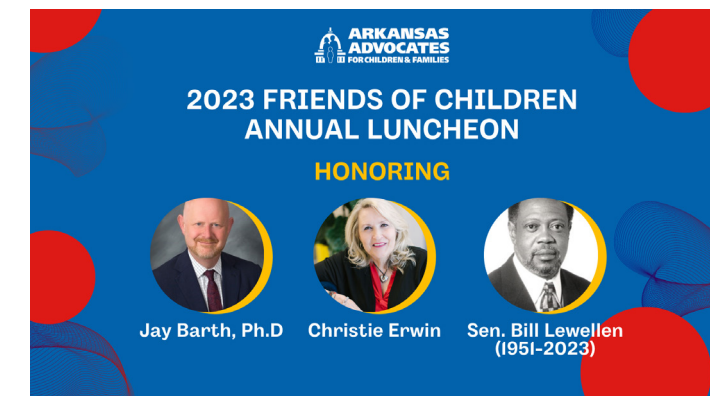
## Celebrating child advocates

Our 2023 Friends of Children Annual Luncheon was a huge success! Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor Entergy Arkansas.

We are always encouraged by the show of support for our work. We are grateful to Jay Barth and Christie Erwin for their work on behalf of our state's children. Jay Barth was instrumental in starting community schools in Little Rock. Christie Erwin's passion is for connecting foster children to their forever families.

We are especially thankful to the family of the late State Senator Bill Lewellen. We were proud to celebrate his legacy child- and equity-centered work.

Go to [www.youtube.com/aradvocates](http://www.youtube.com/aradvocates) to watch the honoree videos.



## Photo Gallery

For more AACF event photos, visit [flickr.com/photos/aacf](http://flickr.com/photos/aacf).

### Northwest Arkansas Anniversary Celebration



Jenny Harmon, Laura Kellams, Lynn Carver, Rev. Jennie Williams, Brenda Gullett, and Missy Darwin Kincaid



Jennifer Ferguson, Xochitl Delgado Solorzano, Peggy Bailey, Keesa Smith, Laura Kellams, Sharon Parrott, and Missy Darwin Kincaid

## Annual Luncheon



Christie Erwin; Adrienne Lewellen, daughter of the late Sen. Bill Lewellen; and Dr. Jay Barth

Incoming Board President Xochitl Delgado Solorzano addresses the luncheon crowd.



AACF staff: Rebecca Zimmermann, Lindsey Lamb, Takari Glover, Cara Neal, Jennifer Ferguson, Laura Kellams, Olivia Gardner, Keesa Smith, Val Habrock, Fran Carter, and Missy Darwin Kincaid