

**KIDS COUNT 2011 Annual Conference Opening Keynote Address**  
**“America’s Challenge, America’s Children: Standing Strong for Kids”**  
**Lisa Hamilton, Vice President, External Affairs, The Annie E. Casey Foundation**  
**The Marriott at Camden Yards, Baltimore, Maryland**  
**Noon to 1:30 p.m.**  
**November 16, 2011**

Thank you for that wonderful introduction.

Welcome to the 2011 KIDS COUNT annual conference.

I thank everyone for joining us here in Baltimore. With the agenda our team has put together, I have no doubt that this is going to be an outstanding conference.

We will reflect on the accomplishments of the KIDS COUNT network over the past year, reconnect with friends from across the country, sharpen our data and advocacy skills, and get recharged up for the important work in the year ahead.

Before continuing, I’d like to take a few moments to thank those who have made this conference possible.

First, the Casey’s Kids Count leadership team who worked hard to provide the great content and speakers you will enjoy this week:

- Mike Laracy
- Laura Speer
- Jann Jackson
- Flo Gutierrez and
- Carol Rickel

But this conference is not just developed by the Casey team. It would not be possible without the members of the KIDS COUNT Steering Committee. Please stand so that we can thank you for your contributions.

I also want to thank all of the KIDS COUNT leaders who gave generously of their time with this year’s consultative sessions:

- Chris Watney
- Joan Benso
- Rich Huddleston
- Ceil Zalkind
- Charron Townsend
- Karen Crompton
- Scott McCown

Also, we want to acknowledge Eric Griego for his long-term leadership of New Mexico Voices for Children (a KIDS COUNT, Voices and SFAI organization) – and wish him well as he runs for a seat in Congress. We never can have too many friends on Capitol Hill!

The last person I would like to thank is a very special member of the Casey team – Don Crary. For 10 years, Don has served as the KIDS COUNT state coordinator and been an architect of the data book.

Don has announced that he will retire at the end of the year. Since joining Casey in 2000, he has been a true champion of KIDS COUNT grantees across the country. Before that, he was a passionate advocate for children and families while serving as Executive Director of New Futures for Youth, and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. Don, I have personally enjoyed working with. Congratulations on a distinguished and accomplished career. Please stand so that your colleagues can salute you.

I give you my best wishes for your retirement — but I won't do that for another month. Before I can let you go, we've still got some work to do on the 2012 KIDS COUNT!

While preparing for this conference, I was told that you would want to hear more about who I am and my thoughts about the direction of KIDS COUNT. So let me share with you a bit about my background, and then I will talk about our plans for the months and years ahead.

I have to admit that I am sometimes amazed at the journey that brought me to this point in my career. But through it all, I've remained the same person – an easygoing Georgia girl – blessed to have the support of my wonderful husband, Erick, a public high school teacher, and our 8-year-old daughter Lauren.

I began my career as a tax lawyer in private practice and joined UPS in 1996 in the tax department.

I quickly decided that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life working as an attorney so I talked my way into a job as program director of the UPS Foundation, responsible for its \$40 million in grant making. While there, I led the design of the foundation's international grant programs and worked to increase volunteerism among the company's 400,000 employees.

I often jokingly say that a tax lawyer with a personality was a commodity too precious for UPS to ignore, so in 2005, the company asked me to move to Washington, D.C., to be a federal lobbyist on tax, data security and privacy, and worker misclassification issues. It was an exciting and challenging time to be in D.C.

For 10 years, I'd said running the UPS Foundation would be my dream job, and I achieved that goal in 2007. I loved working in the philanthropic community. I repositioned the foundation into new grant-making areas, such as environmental sustainability; expanded our charitable work around disaster relief; and created a new national teen driving program in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of America that is teaching thousands of low-income kids the same safe-driving principles used by UPS drivers every day.

But still new opportunities were ahead of me at UPS. In 2009, I was named vice president of Global Public Relations. I am proud to have led the most successful Christmas media campaign in the company's history, but I also had to manage a number of very difficult PR issues like the discovery of package bombs from Yemen on a UPS plane in the United Kingdom. Do you remember that? When the President of the United States is giving a press conference about your company, you learn a lot about PR – FAST!

I never really considered what this wide variety of experiences was leading to until Patrick McCarthy invited me to join Casey. As Mike said, after 3 years on the Board of Trustees, I joined the Casey staff in March as the vice president of external affairs.

It is a chance to use all of the skills I developed in corporate America. I am responsible for the Foundation's communications and public policy work; partnerships with policy, civic and philanthropy organization; and the crown jewel of my portfolio -- KIDS COUNT.

Work in these areas has been going strong for decades, but this is the first time they have all been combined into one unit. I am extremely excited to help our team leverage all of these tools to increase Casey's influence on Capitol Hill and in communities across America.

It is clear to me that philanthropy is what I enjoy most. Simply being a part of changing the world and people's lives allows me to contribute to the most meaningful work I know. So I am delighted to be a part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and to get the opportunity to advance Jim Casey's charitable legacy from a different vantage point.

We are here at a perilous time for our nation – as circumstances have become dire for more and more families in recent years.

The title of this conference – **America's Children, America's Challenge: Standing Strong for Kids** – is a call to action that all of us must be prepared to meet.

Even with great leadership and strong staff, Casey is extremely fortunate to have YOU as partners in this work. You know the problems in your communities and you know what it takes to bring about change. This work could not move forward without your efforts on the front lines to push for better practices and policies to give kids the brightest future possible.

The release of the 2011 Kids Count Data Book and essay certainly proved what we can accomplish together. It is clear that our voices are being heard.

We have tabulated more than 2,000 stories in all 50 states on the KIDS COUNT release this year. And people are visiting the online Data Center in record numbers.

I thank all of you for the success of the 2011 release. I appreciate all of your efforts and your contributions to the numerous state data products. Our success in sparking a national dialogue about poverty demonstrates the power of your collective voice.

We need to take advantage of this opportunity by showing decision-makers what is happening in our communities.

Casey is committed to increasing its work with national policy organizations, leading nonprofits, our philanthropic peers, KIDS COUNT grantees and other stakeholders.

In my new role, I want to help Casey find better ways to gather and present the best possible data, research and stories that paint a true picture of what's happening to children and families. We must give decision-makers the information they need – in the format they need it – to craft policy and practice solutions that give every child a fair shot at success.

Over the last few months, I've been thinking a lot about one particular UPS experience that frames how I think about the role of KIDS COUNT in promoting sound solutions for children.

I have to admit that while working as a UPS executive, I never expected that I would be required to don the ubiquitous brown uniform and become a UPS driver.

But the company had other ideas. While I was working in D.C. as a lobbyist, they wanted to deepen my understanding of the business. So they sent me out to be a driver – full time. And not just for three days — or even three weeks — but three months! And I delivered during Christmas, which is UPS' peak season.

I wish that I could tell you that I showed up every day with a smile. I did not. The boxes were very heavy, and it was cold and snowy in Maryland. But I learned at least **three important lessons** during those months as a UPS driver that inspire me in my new role at Casey.

**First, I learned that I'm capable of much more than I imagine I can achieve.**

All UPS trucks are stick shift, and I didn't know how to drive a standard transmission vehicle. I was in my late 30s, and I hardly had the strength to lift those heavy boxes. Most days, I woke up wondering what I'd gotten myself into. Yet, by the end of the day, I realized I had delivered more than 250 packages. One day, I even delivered a 160-pound armoire from Wal-Mart, and I only weighed 130 pounds. Trust me, it took a dolly and a lot of pushing.

I'll bet many of you sitting there could apply the same description to your work advocating for kids and families in your states. You've got a lot to accomplish, the forecast isn't good, and you're not sure some days that you have what it takes to deliver.

Despite these headwinds, the KIDS COUNT network is making progress every day on a host of issues. For example....just in 2011, this network has:

- Gotten Connecticut to pass an Earned Income Tax Credit that will benefit thousands of low-income families;
- Preserved \$25 million for mental health services in Vermont;

- Helped pass legislation in Oregon that will grant tuition waivers to foster youth; AND
- Secured additional funding in New Jersey for high-quality preschool programs for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row.

What does this mean to me? It means there is no limit to what this network can accomplish. You find opportunities where they don't seem to exist, turning possibilities into realities through new programs, new resources and more support for vulnerable families. Like me, you've just gotta keep pushing until you achieve success.

**The second thing I came to learn during my UPS truck-driving days is the importance of every single package to its recipient.**

My one-mile route (yes, it took me 12 hours to do the deliveries and pickups for a one-mile route) taught me a lot about our business and the global economy. I was excited each day to see the small business owners and community organizations we serve – the trophy store that made awards for every soccer team in the neighborhood...the dentist office...the middle school.

I knew that the deliveries they were anxiously awaiting had the potential to change their business.

The same is true for the families Casey and KIDS COUNT serve.

By delivering effective policies and practices, the KIDS COUNT network is changing the lives of millions of children in the United States.

**The third lesson I learned while driving is the power of a strong network that values teamwork.**

UPS is the ultimate network, with a hub-and-spoke system that extends across 220 countries. Great service depends on every link in the chain, from pickup to delivery.

You might have figured out by now that I was not the best UPS driver of all time – no matter how cute I might look in the shorts! But I made it through the experience because of the support and encouragement of my fellow UPS drivers.

There were a few evenings when it was clear that I wasn't going to be able to make my deliveries in the time allotted. So I contacted my supervisor, and he sent other drivers to come and help me. They had their own trucks full of packages, but they backed up to mine and took the deliveries I couldn't make.

Likewise, our KIDS COUNT network delivers across the country through teamwork. Together, we reach all 50 states, going deep into local communities. Our hub-and-spoke system enables KIDS COUNT to influence policy on a local, state and national level.

This KIDS COUNT conference is a chance to collaborate. Our success depends on the ability to connect with one another to share best practices and strategies. We are a powerful voice for raising awareness of the challenges children face and advocating for solutions that will improve their lives.

Beyond those three months as a driver, I learned one critical lesson about success while working at UPS. The only way to stay ahead of the competition is to **innovate** and **keep building your network**.

Innovation is nothing new at Casey. We have lots of new work and ideas in the pipeline, including some you have been hearing about.

- For example, in 2012 we are launching a new initiative aimed at transforming the corrections, or “deep end,” of the juvenile justice system.
- We continue to be excited about the strong national interest in the Casey-led Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.
- Next year we are piloting a new model called Evidence 2 Success, which will help public agencies partner use more evidence based practices in serving families.
- In our place-based work, we are transitioning from Making Connections to Family-Centered Community Change, which uses our two-generation approach to build supportive communities.
- And next year, we are launching a new child welfare policy hub that will be available to KIDS COUNT grantees. This resource center – a partnership with First Focus, Child Trends and Spitfire Communications -- will provide policy analysis and advocacy support on a wide range of child welfare issues.

Let me conclude by talking about how we plan to **strengthen our network** by enhancing the work of KIDS COUNT, something that Patrick discussed at this conference last year.

To determine the best ways to build our state advocacy capacity, Casey held consultative sessions with a variety of partners and we conducted a brand analysis of KIDS COUNT. That information led us to believe that we have not yet realized the full potential of KIDS COUNT at the national or state level.

I’m pleased to announce that in 2012 we are making additional investments in **three areas** to expand our policy work through KIDS COUNT:

First, we want to provide our network with **more strategic policy tools** for advocacy with your stakeholders.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book continues to be a strong vehicle for the Foundation to raise the visibility of child and family policy issues.

Since 1990, the Data Book has used 10 stand alone indicators to assess overall child well being at the national and state level. We think this format misses opportunities to highlight trends around specific domains like health or education – issues you spend a lot of time advocating for.

We are currently in the process of reviewing our model and expect that the 2012 Data Book will feature a revamped index of child well being that includes rankings by state of sub-categories like Education, Health, and Economic Well Being.

The result will be a refreshed product and opportunities for topic area recommendations and policy advocacy by the Foundation and state grantees.

You have also been accustomed Casey including an essay on a particular subject affecting children in the KIDS COUNT data book. Going forward, we plan to release the Data Book as a stand-alone publication without a policy message. Instead we will include a brief summary of significant trends in the data at the national level.

We will go in-depth on topics using a different strategy. In 2012 we will release two KIDS COUNT policy reports with relevant, state-level data that support our recommendations for specific policy changes. This is similar to the “special report” format we used in 2010 to launch the Grade Level Reading initiative.

Separately, we will produce two to four shorter data snapshots under the KIDS COUNT brand. The snapshots will focus on one or two new pieces of data. They will include state-level statistics while highlighting national trends.

We think that this new suite of products will better support our shared policy agenda and keep KIDS COUNT top of mind throughout the year.

**Our second major investment in 2012 will be to increase our policy grants to the network**, doubling our contribution in this area from about \$500,000 to \$1 million. We feel it is extremely important to fully support the work you do to confront state-specific issues. When faced with a unique challenge or opportunity, we know that extra resources often make a critical difference. These additional funds will allow us to support more of your advocacy around the issues that Casey cares about.

**The third major investment relates to building the network’s communications capacity.** Although in 2011 KIDS COUNT received the best media attention ever, we are not resting on our laurels. We will be offering a **new Communications Institute** and awarding a **new set of communications grants** to help build your capacity to reach broader audiences.

Credible data combined with strong communications is the recipe for great advocacy. We feel like these new investments are an important way we can strengthen your state policy reform efforts.

We are very excited about all of these changes, which we believe will help us – Casey and the KIDS COUNT organizations – build influence at the state and federal policy level for greater impact.

In closing, I want to say on behalf of the entire Casey Foundation that we look forward to your continued partnership in the coming year. Through your thoughtful insight and effective advocacy, you play a critical role in taking good ideas to scale.

Take it from this former UPS driver – you are responsible for the world’s most precious cargo – the future of our children. For them, I know we will deliver.

Thank you.