TOGETHER WITH OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS, WE ACHIEVED IMPORTANT VICTORIES FOR KANSAS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DURING THE 2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

—Shannon Cotsoradis, President and CEO

The KIDS college savings program got the green light to allow private donors and charitable organizations to contribute to families' higher education savings accounts.

The Children’s Initiatives Fund received $56 million in tobacco settlement monies, thanks to the work of KAC and the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness.

The Earned Income Tax Credit was saved from elimination and will continue to help lift children out of poverty.

KAC, as a leader of the Kansas Dental Project, built momentum to expand access to dental care in Kansas.

Although we are proud of these successes, they are somewhat overshadowed by tax policy decisions made by lawmakers this session. These choices compromise the state's future revenue and undermine the health and well-being of our next generation. Please join us again next year as we shape policy that puts children first.
With college costs on the rise, parents can use all the help they can get when it comes to saving for their children’s education. **The KIDS college savings program** is a great resource for low-income families: For every dollar they put into a Learning Quest higher education savings account, the state will make an equal match, up to $600. KAC successfully advocated for a new partner for the KIDS program. It’s now law that third-party charitable organizations and private donors will be able to contribute to KIDS accounts, giving parents an extra boost as they save for the future. This new public/private partnership will help more children and families take an important step toward self-sufficiency and, ultimately, strengthen the Kansas workforce of the future.

This year’s tobacco settlement payment came in at $58 million – more than enough for the early education programs supported by the **Children’s Initiatives Fund**. During the legislative session, there was an effort to move a portion of the tobacco dollars into the State General Fund. Another proposal sought to restrict when and how agencies could spend their CIF appropriations. KAC and the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness pushed back, stressing the importance of investing in children as a way to sustain long-term growth of the Kansas economy. Both measures were defeated, and the CIF received $56 million as recommended by the Kansas Children’s Cabinet. The additional $2 million was deposited in the Kansas Endowment for Youth Fund.
ENHANCING FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY

The Earned Income Tax Credit lifts more children out of poverty than any other single program. However, the EITC was under threat of elimination or reduction in several tax reform proposals considered by lawmakers. The good news is that in the end, the EITC was saved, thanks to the work of KAC and the Partnership to Preserve the EITC. Unfortunately, the tax plan approved by the Legislature and signed into law by the governor includes the repeal of other credits that benefit Kansas families, including those for adoption, food sales tax, child and dependent care, and child day care expenses. It also bars renters from participating in the Homestead Property Tax Refund program, which makes it more difficult for low-income families to afford housing.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE

The Legislature embraced the idea of expanding the scope of practice of dental hygienists when it passed House Bill 2631, allowing hygienists to perform temporary fillings, denture adjustments and extractions of loose baby teeth. However, this is just a small step in the right direction. The Registered Dental Practitioner model would go even further in mitigating the dental crisis in Kansas. RDPs would work in rural areas, safety-net clinics, schools and nursing homes, providing services that help Kansans avoid costly emergency care. Although the bill remained in committee in the 2012 session, this is a multi-year effort, and KAC and the Kansas Dental Project are prepared to move the RDP proposal forward in 2013.