

Annie E. Casey Foundation Makes Kids Count

BY KANDICE K. BRIDGES

Jim Casey was on a mission starting at the age of 11, when he left school to support his family because of his father's declining health. He founded the small messenger company that ultimately would become United Parcel Service (UPS). The success of UPS enabled him to establish the Annie E. Casey Foundation, named after his mother. Through the efforts of Jim and his siblings, the Foundation became the nation's largest philanthropy dedicated solely to improving the lives of vulnerable children.

"Jim believed kids could succeed if parents provided them with emotional, ethical and material support," says Florencia Gutierrez, senior research associate for KIDS COUNT. In 1990, when child well-being information was limited and inaccessible, the Foundation launched the KIDS COUNT project.

What started as a hard copy book has expanded to include a robust, interactive online resource. "The KIDS COUNT Data Center is a one-stop shop on child well-being data," says Gutierrez. Thousands of indicators are available, spanning demographics, education, the economy, health, family, community, safety and risk behaviors.



"As a nation, we obsess over indices like the stock index, the consumer price index, GDP and so on. Our CEO, Patrick McCarthy, reminds us, 'Wouldn't it be great if we could have this kind of data on the well-being of kids in America?'" says Norris West, director of strategic communications for the Foundation. KIDS COUNT is that data.

KIDS COUNT provides information that is meaningful because it is current and reflects real-world issues affecting children. "The site is constantly evolving," says Gutierrez. Most recently, KIDS COUNT partnered with experts in the field of race equity to provide a robust picture of how all kids, including children of color, are doing.

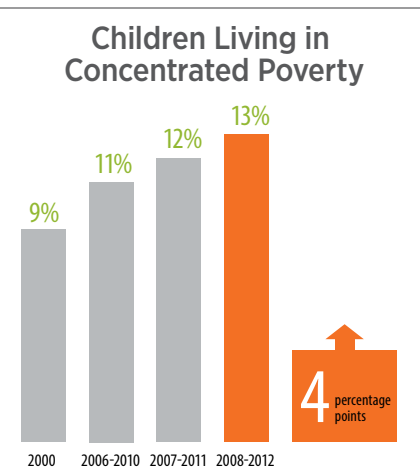
The benefits of KIDS COUNT aren't theoretical. For example, the state of Delaware used KIDS COUNT to quantify its infant mortality rate. "Shocked by how Delaware ranked, the governor put together a task force to develop recommendations," says Gutierrez. "After implementation, Delaware saw a 10% decrease in its infant mortality rate."

Delaware's experience demonstrates that meaningful change occurs at the intersection of quality data, effective communications and advocacy. "KIDS COUNT data help track the progress of kids from all racial groups, all parts of the country, all communities, cities, even congressional districts," says West.

KIDS COUNT is a comprehensive resource. Family foundations can use it to research

THE KIDS COUNT DATA CENTER

- Ranks data points by state, county, congressional districts and school districts
- Compares data points by geographic area
- Maps data points
- Creates line graphs and bar graphs
- Generates customizable infographics
- Shares through social media
- Creates static images for presentations and reports
- Embeds images in blogs



Since 2000, the percentage of children living in high-poverty communities has increased four points.

Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center - data from 2000 Census and 5-year estimates from American Community Survey

programs, allocate resources or persuade legislators. "While data alone can't get the job done," explains Gutierrez, "we need the data to start conversations about where changes and investments are needed."

Jim Casey's legacy of looking out for children lives on through the Foundation he created. Says West, "Jim's mission continues to drive us every day." ■

For more information about KIDS COUNT and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, visit: www.aecf.org