

Opportunity Knocks

A weekly publication — February 24, 2010

FOCUS

By Sharon Hixson

Economic downturn means: Balanced state budgets require either cuts, increased revenues, or a combination of these. Kansas Ac-

tion for Children presented a webinar February 24, with a solid background for a discussion of state budget and tax structure in Kansas. Sticking to their one-hour commitment of time, April Holman covered helpful facts and concepts to prepare advocates to discuss budget and tax issues with the best of them.

The webinar will be offered again Tuesday, March 2, at 10 a.m. Contact Kansas Action for more information. I certainly recommend the webinar to anyone/everyone with an interest in engaging in the decisions related to how Kansas can fund its collective priorities.



Jean and Johnathan Appelhanz ready for *tiny-k* Day again this year. (See Testimony on P.2.)

services? Parents make a BIG impact when they tell their personal *tiny-k* story!! Even if a parent/family from your Network cannot attend with you this year, be sure to COME on March 10. Wear the color RED and join with others across the State to celebrate *tiny-k* Day 2010.

Doug Bowman made arrangements and provides the following information for the Networks: "Our headquarters will be in Meadowlark, a 4th Floor conference room in the Curtis State Office Building, 1000 SW Jackson.

WELCOME to *tiny-k* Day 2010!

The CCECDS and the *tiny-k* Foundation welcome you to participate in *tiny-k* Day **March 10**. This is an annual event giving *tiny-k* advocates the opportunity to combine efforts, on one day, to educate and remind Kansas legislators of the importance and value of *tiny-k* services. Can you bring a parent and/or family involved in *tiny-k*

There will be a brief (and optional) kick-off event at 8:30 am. We will give you last minute developments on issues of concern.

Appointments: This is the heart & soul of our efforts to educate policy-makers. Make your appointments to see your Senators and House members on your own. IF you need any kind of assistance (determining who they are, where to find their office, their committee schedule, etc.), contact Doug. For some Senators, they may prefer to meet with a delegation representing several networks that cover their district. Be flexible.

Wear Red! Traditionally, we have encouraged everyone to wear something red. This enhances our visibility in the Capitol.

Parking: There are several options. The underground garage on the North side of the Capitol has over 100 spots that are free, but limited to 2 hours. There are two rows of spaces on the West side of the Judicial Center that are free for four hours. For those who spend the entire day with us, I suggest paying for a spot in one of the city garages: Crosby Place on 8th street, Ninth Street Garage at 215 SE 9th, or Centre City at 8th and Kansas street.

The Capitol: Ongoing construction continues to make things a mess. Some House members have an office across the street in the Docking Building. Most legislators do share their office space and a part-time secretary with another legislator.

The actual meeting: Be a little early. Do check in with the secretary. Be patient, but persistent. Things can change hour to hour – so be flexible. Introduce yourself and where you are from. Get to the point – be succinct. Make it real. Say thank you!

Ongoing communication: Make this meeting the start of a relationship. Ask how best to stay in touch. Offer to be a resource. Follow-up with a written thank you note.

Lunch: We will have some modest snacks, sandwich makings, and soup available in our headquarters. A donation to the *tiny-k* Foundation would be appreciated. Vend-

ing machines are nearby, as are several restaurants. An e-mail telling us that you are coming will help us to plan.

Our message: A “talking points” document will be available the week before the event. In this year of an historic budget crisis, we will be emphasizing the critical need to maintain our efforts – so as to be eligible for future Part C federal grants. I will include a FAQ document when I send out the talking points.

Reporting: It is helpful to us, if we receive a report of which policy-makers received a visit & how things went. This allows us to evaluate the efficacy of our event. Stop by headquarters and let us know. Thank you for taking time out of your busy lives.

***tiny-k* Foundation:** The Foundation made available advocacy kits for a small fee. The order deadline has passed but the Foundation is also offering twenty (20) *tiny-k* portfolios to the first 20 networks that claim one, at the event. We thank them for their efforts.”

The Fund Development Retreat in October, an activity of the Compassion Kansas grant, was full of discussion and ideas for follow-up.

The *tiny-k* Board established consensus on the following core purposes:

- Raise money to supplement local Networks.
- Advocate/Increase awareness of *tiny-k*
- Create a "network" among Networks (In other words, increased communication among Networks)

It was suggested that each *tiny-k* Network be contacted for feedback concerning the value of *tiny-k* Foundation to their specific local Network. Sharon has begun to contact each Network for feedback regarding the following questions:

1. **What is your vision of the *tiny-k* Foundation organization?**
2. **What goals would you suggest for the *tiny-k* Foundation organization?**
3. **How would you like to connect with the *tiny-k* Foundation organization? (?Harvest-based fundraiser?)**

Please be thinking about your Network's perspective on these questions. Be expecting the phone call! Feel free to initiate the phone call to Sharon (620-728-8340) or email your response. (URLearning@aol.com)

Jean Appelhanz's Testimony to the Kansas Legislature on February 11, 2010:

“My name is Jean Appelhanz, and this is a picture of my son, Jonathan Appelhanz. (*Jonathan's photo passed around the audience.*) He will be 2 years old in March and is the youngest of my three children. I am here today to speak about *tiny-k* and its impact on our lives.

During my pregnancy we discovered that Jonathan had some physical abnormalities. We anxiously prepared for his arrival. On March 3, 2008, Jonathan was born via C-section. Within hours he was in a helicopter on his way to Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City.

Jonathan spent his first month of life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. During that time he was diagnosed with Opitz Syndrome. It is a rare disorder that prevented Jonathan from being able to swallow. Jonathan needed to have stomach surgery and a feeding tube placed before coming home.

So here we were: bringing home a baby with special needs and an unknown future. Luckily a social worker at Children's Mercy got us in touch with *tiny-k* of Douglas County. Our *tiny-k* coach visited us the day after Jonathan came home. My husband and I felt completely overwhelmed, but *tiny-k* was there to support us 100%. Our coach made sure we became comfortable and confident in our ability to care for Jonathan.

Due to Opitz Syndrome, Jonathan also experiences developmental delays. Over the past two years our family has relied on *tiny-k* to help Jonathan learn to sit up, roll over, crawl, stand, and cruise around the furniture. Once the feeding tube was removed *tiny-k* providers gave us advice on how to feed Jonathan a bottle and eventually eat food.

Although Jonathan does not yet talk or walk on his own, he would not be at this point without *tiny-k*. Honestly, our whole family wouldn't be at this point, either. Caring for Jonathan has been an emotional roller coaster. Together with *tiny-k*, we celebrate Jonathan's accomplishments, and are given support when he misses milestones.

I feel so strongly about *tiny-k*'s cause that I have joined its Board of Directors (*tiny-k* Early Intervention - Douglas County). I want to give back to the organization that has meant so much to our family. When we needed help with Medicaid applications, *tiny-k* providers were there. When Jonathan needs physical therapy, *tiny-k* providers are there. Even when I need to have a good cry over my son's situation, *tiny-k* is there.

Today I ask you to continue full funding for *tiny-k* services. Without it, many families face the prospect of caring for a special needs child on their own. I am very grateful to have had *tiny-k* available to help us. I want other families to have that same support. *Tiny-k* has provided not only physical help for our child but also emotional support for the family. When the time arrives to make budget decisions I ask that you keep Jonathan's story in mind. This little boy deserves a chance just like everyone else.”