

ROOTING FOR KIDS!

News for The Children's Hospital's
Grassroots Advocates



The Children's Hospital



One of Children's Strongest Advocates Speaks Up about Participating

Interview with Jennifer Vaccaro, One of The
Children's Hospital's Most Active Advocates

Jennifer Vaccaro—a four-year member of The Children's Hospital Grassroots Advocacy Network (GAN) and the network's most active advocate during the 2008 legislative session—speaks to *TCH* News about her passion and inspiration behind being a voice for kids.

Why are you a member of the GAN?

I'm a member because I believe that children's needs for health and safety issues must be heard and reinforced within our community.

Why is it important to have a voice for Colorado children?

They do not always have a voice and need adults to speak on their behalf to drive important issues that will have an impact in their lives.

What is the most rewarding part of being part of the GAN?

The most rewarding part is that your voice is heard by lawmakers, and they respond with feedback on how they feel about the initiative that is being presented to them. Once an initiative is passed, you feel like you made a difference to a child.

Everyone's busy these days; please discuss how easy it is to become an advocate and how a little effort goes a long way:

It is the easiest volunteer work I have done: it is so simple, you register online, you are sent initiatives through e-mail. All you have to do is read the e-mail, add any additional comments and click send. GAN's system automatically delivers the e-mail to the legislator. It is fast and easy, plus your voice is being heard for all the children in Colorado.

Any additional comments you would like to share?

GAN has provided me with knowledge of how the legislative system works and how the initiatives get passed. I also have learned how to more effectively get my voice across when writing to our legislative committees. This experience has allowed me to explore other volunteer opportunities that deal with being a voice for children.



Legislative Session Boosts Children's Health Care

Governor Ritter signs bills into law at The Children's Hospital

Colorado Governor Bill Ritter visited The Children's Hospital on June 3 to sign into law several bills that will provide increased access to health insurance coverage for Colorado's children. Ritter signed a total of 11 health care-related bills aimed toward significant investments and progress in health care programs and reform.

"These bills represent a solid foundation for continued progress toward better health care for all Coloradans," Governor Ritter said during a ceremony at the hospital. "They extend coverage to thousands of more children, improve mental health benefits, remove red tape, bring greater transparency to our health care system, enhance private insurance coverage, and strengthen our overall public health infrastructure. This was a great legislative session for health care in Colorado."

"Investments made in health prevention and interventions produce long term savings, increase the quality of life and decrease the likelihood of physical, emotional, behavioral and mental health problems," Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien said. "These bills make sense socially and financially and they increase the capacity for children's health and well-being."

[*Learn more about how children's health care issues fared during the 2008 legislative session.](#)



Be Sunscreen Savvy: Guidelines to Keep Kids Safe Fun in the Sun

The weather is warming up, kids are out of school and summer is soon to be in full swing, which all means your children will be spending a lot more time in the sun. When you know the facts, you can teach your children how to enjoy fun in the sun without feeling the burn. Joanna M. Burch, MD, Assistant Professor of Dermatology and Pediatrics at The Children's Hospital, answers commonly asked questions about sunscreen and gives you the know-how to keep your children safe this season.

Here are some tips from Dr. Burch to help protect your children from the sun:

- Sunscreen is only that, a screen. Higher SPFs can block the vast majority of the sun's rays, but no sunscreen blocks 100%. Sunscreen should be a part of a total sun protection program, including hats, protective clothing and avoidance of the mid-day sun when the UV rays are the strongest (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.).
- The UV rays of the sun are the most intense at noon, but the temperature usually peaks at 3 p.m. After 3 p.m. is a much safer time to take your kids to the pool. Seek shade and use hats and clothing to help protect young skin from the sun if you must be out during mid-day. Don't forget that water and snow reflect UV rays, so faces and lips should be protected with sunscreen very regularly.
- Chemical sunscreens tend to burn the eyes if they migrate in that direction. Sunscreens with only zinc oxide or titanium dioxide do not burn the eyes. My favorite is Blue Lizard Baby or Sensitive Skin formulations.
- For more information, check out The Skin Cancer Foundation web site at www.skincancer.org/sunscreens.

[***Learn more about Fun in the Sun](#)



Legislator Profile: Senator Suzanne Williams (D - Arapahoe County)

District: 28

Previous Occupation: Senator Williams worked for 22 years as a special education teacher in the Cherry Creek School District.

Political Experience: Beginning her fourth year in the State Senate after serving eight years in the Colorado House of Representatives. Senator Williams is the only registered American Indian state legislator in Colorado. Currently, she serves as the Vice Chair of the Transportation Committee, the Legislative Chair for the Early Childhood Commission, is a member of the Education Committee, and is the Assistant Caucus Chair.

Personal: Senator Williams has lived in her district for over 30 years. She has been married for over 40 years, has two grown children and four grandchildren. Senator Williams earned her B.S. from Baylor University and her Masters in Special Education from the University of Colorado. She enjoys reading, travel and athletic club workouts and many outdoor activities.

Thanks to Senator Williams for participating as an expert panelist during the June 25th Advocacy Lunch & Learn!



Grassroots Advocacy Network Updates

The 2008 state legislative session came to a close on May 6, ending a flurry of activity over 120 days during which legislators finalized the state budget and debated nearly 700 bills. The Children's Hospital and our dedicated network of grassroots advocates contacted legislators on many of those bills because of their potential to impact the health and well being of Colorado kids. In all, over 3300 emails were sent to legislators by our advocates - a huge THANK YOU to all of you who helped us be a powerful voice for kids!

Online Grassroots Advocacy Success!

The Children's Hospital would like to thank each and every one of you for caring about the health and well-being of kids through your advocacy efforts. A new study was released showing an explosion in online grassroots advocacy. Nearly 50 percent of all adult Americans contacted a Member of Congress in the last five years, often motivated by third-party organizations' advocacy efforts to support, oppose or learn more about issues of interest, according to the report, *Communicating with Congress: How the Internet Has Changed Citizen Engagement*, released by Congressional Management Foundation (CMF). The report found that 43 percent of Americans who contacted Congress used the Internet as their means of communication, more than twice the percentage that used postal mail or the telephone.

GAN Membership Challenge

Be on the lookout for an email announcing the annual July GAN Membership Challenge! As you know, The Children's Hospital Grassroots Advocacy Network is an easy way to join forces with thousands of other people to make sure that state and national laws and policies are good for kids. Currently our Network is made up of more than 4,000 people across the state of Colorado. During the month of July, you can help us recruit new advocates to the Network and win some great PRIZES including gift certificates and GAN collateral!!

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