

Opinion: Kids in Common provides strong voice for county children

Youth from low-income families require advocate to help accomplish needed changes

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California has the greatest diversity of children in the country, and Santa Clara County is the most diverse county in California. The future success of this diversity lies with the children. Do children in Santa Clara County have a strong voice? Is there an entity that exclusively addresses the needs of children wherever policy is made?

Fortunately, we have Kids in Common (KIC), a long-standing advocacy non-profit that does not sell anything. Its only product is advocacy for children and their families, particularly those from low-income families. KIC's vision is "Every child safe, healthy, successful in learning, successful in life."

KIC has become the strongest voice for children and families in Northern California. KIC produces a data book annually that provides the most current and accurate data on the well-being of children in Santa Clara County by race, ethnicity, social class and geographic locations. The book is remarkable in that it includes data on a wide range of topics impacting children's lives and measures where we are, where we have been and where we should be moving. It is a document that guides policymakers, community leaders, educational leaders and politicians, indicating where they should allocate resources to have a positive impact on children's lives. Additionally, for the past 15 years, KIC has hosted the annual Santa Clara County Children's Summit bringing together 300-plus children's advocates and leaders to hear national and regional experts focusing on what is best for our children and how do we lead to accomplish needed changes.

Kids in Common has had a remarkable impact on children's lives in our county. For example, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors has adopted many of our recommendations, including:

- Affirm The Bill of Rights for Children and Youth to set a standard of how children should be supported for their wellbeing.
- Create an annual Children's Budget directed on their needs.

- Require that there be a “Child Impact Statement” on all transmittals submitted for the agenda for the Board of Supervisors. This creates a continued focus on what is best for our children.

In 2020 a discovery process was conducted to understand what KIC’s value is to the community. One of the key findings was that KIC could be trusted to stand for what is best for children. The report indicated that KIC was seen as:

- An advocate for policy positions that individual organizations often cannot sponsor.
- The community’s conscience.
- An organization that holds member organizations and systems accountable in ways others cannot.
- A credible advocacy voice that is not wedded to institutional pressures.

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