EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
UNTIL 12:01 a.m. EDT, Monday, June 24, 2012

Contact: Bett Williams, Director of Communications
803-744-4042 or bwilliams@scchildren.org

Children in South Carolina Children struggle, fall behind the nation in Economic Well-Being, Education and Health indicators

Columbia, S.C. – The annual KIDS COUNT Data Book shows the effects of the recession on South Carolina’s children. Our overall rank in child well-being has fallen from 43 to 45 behind Georgia and Alabama.

Sue Williams, chief executive officer for Children’s Trust of South Carolina, states, “We are moving in the wrong direction. While we recognize that these indicators are from 2011 data, they show we have a long road ahead of us. We need to be doing whatever it takes to ensure that our children are moving out of poverty and that they are healthy, educated, and have a strong family system.”

Children’s Trust is home to KIDS COUNT South Carolina. KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policy makers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all our children.

KIDS COUNT measures child well-being in four domains: Economic Well-being, Education, Health, and Family and Community.

The most drastic ranking change is in the Economic Well-Being category. South Carolina dropped from 34 in the nation to 44 in a single year. South Carolina’s persistently high unemployment rates and lingering economic recession have taken their toll on our children. Williams adds, “We are hopeful that the success of Gov. Nikki Haley has had in bringing new jobs to our state will provide the relief and financial security our families and children need.”

As the KIDS COUNT report notes, “Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development. Poverty and financial stress can impede children’s cognitive development and their ability to learn. It can contribute to behavioral, social and emotional problems, and poor health. The risks posed by economic hardship are greatest among children who experience poverty when they are young and among children who experience persistent and deep poverty.”

While all our Education indicators marginally improved, we are being out-paced by other states, and our rank dropped from 40 to 41. There are slightly more children attending preschool, more fourth-graders are proficient or more than proficient in reading and more eight-graders are proficient or more than proficient in math. In addition, there are still 32 percent of high school students not graduating on time.
South Carolina sees success in the Health category, where we have significant improvements in reducing low-birthweight babies, children without health insurance, child and teen deaths, and teens who abuse alcohol and drugs. Despite these improvements, our national rank moved from 40 to 44.

In the Family and Community category, our ranking remained stable but there are cautionary signs. We have more children in families where the head of household has a high school diploma and teen birth rates remain on the decline. On the flip side, there are more children living in high-poverty areas and growing up in single-family parent families.

Williams notes, “When families struggle, as so many of ours are right now, communities need to be strong to help families give children what they need to grow into productive citizens. As South Carolina copes with the lingering effects of a persistent recession, investing in strategies that support children and families is critical for South Carolina’s future. Programs like home-visiting, preventing child abuse and neglect, and family strengthening are more important than ever,” says Williams.

To learn more about what Children’s Trust is doing to keep South Carolina’s children safe and thriving, visit scchildren.org.

###

**About Children’s Trust of South Carolina**

Children’s Trust of South Carolina is the only statewide organization dedicated to strengthening and supporting public and private prevention efforts that keep South Carolina’s children safe. We work to prevent child abuse, neglect, and unintentional injuries so that every child has the opportunity to thrive in a healthy, nurturing environment. Children’s Trust is home to KIDS COUNT South Carolina, Safe Kids South Carolina, Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina, and other programs that deliver on our mission.

**About KIDS COUNT Data Book**

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data is embargoed until 12:01 a.m. EDT, June 24, 2013 at datacenter.kidscount.org/databook/2013. Through the KIDS COUNT Data Center, users can download the complete *Data Book* and access hundreds of other measures of child well-being and view real-time information on mobile devices.

**About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information visit aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.