



Report

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Vol. 21, No. 4

May 31, 2018

Even more new faces!

The next executive director isn't Arise's only staff news this month. Turn to Page 2 to meet our new southeast Alabama organizer, Mike Nicholson, and our new social work intern, Cheryl Myrick. (We're also excited to introduce you to our incoming communications associate in the June newsletter!)

Save the date

Arise's 30th anniversary celebration
Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018
Aldersgate UMC,
Montgomery

Join us as we celebrate 30 years and say thank you to Arise's outgoing executive director Kimble Forrister upon his retirement. Watch your email and future newsletters for details on time and registration.

Upcoming events

June 11/July 9, Fairhope – Baldwin County Arise meeting, Fairhope Friends Meeting House, 6 p.m.

June 12, Mobile – Mobile County Arise meeting, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, 6 p.m.

July 27 – Deadline for Arise member groups to submit proposals for 2019 issue priorities.

Sept. 8, Montgomery – Annual meeting, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, 9:30 a.m.

Kimble Forrister retiring in June after 27 years **Hyden to be Arise's next director**

By *Chris Sanders*,
communications director

The Board of Directors of Arise has chosen Robyn Hyden as the organization's next executive director. Hyden will begin her tenure in July. She will take over for Arise's current executive director, Kimble Forrister, who will retire at the end of June after 27 years leading the organization.

Hyden joins Arise from the United Way of Central Alabama, where she has served as director of grants management in the Department of Community Initiatives since 2017. Previously, Hyden worked as a north Alabama organizer for Arise and directed development and

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A note from Arise's board president

By *Cindy Lowry*, *Board President of Alabama Arise and Arise Citizens' Policy Project*



On behalf of the Board of Directors of Alabama Arise and Arise Citizens' Policy Project, I am excited to announce that we have chosen

Robyn Hyden to be Arise's next executive director. Robyn will begin work officially on July 2. She will replace Kimble Forrister, who is retiring next month after 27 years as our executive director.

Robyn has what we believe to be the right attributes – passion, commitment and professionalism – to lead this organization into the future, and we are excited to see what great things she will do. She really impressed us in the search

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A few words from Kimble

By Kimble Forrister,
executive director

You know that next generation I've been talking about? We've been steadily changing the face of Arise, but now we've really arrived. Our new director, Robyn Hyden, is one of the best in that new generation. She's visionary, she's grounded, and she's skilled in several areas where I'm a Luddite. (I'm still not on Twitter.)

Robyn was one of our best organizers, sharing responsibility for north Alabama with Stan Johnson. One longtime Arise member wrote, "She is the best organizer I have ever known. She has the ability to listen to everyone in the group but still direct the conversation. ... She brings out the best of what they say, and usually ends the meeting just on time. She is a treasure." She also plowed lots of new ground for us among new activists after the 2016 election.

Robyn will fit right in with our staff. Her style is collaborative and thoughtful. She's younger than most of the staff, but that's OK. I think everyone is pulling for her to succeed in her new role. She has broad work experience. She edited a campus newspaper and was a development director. At the United Way of Central Alabama, she managed large federal grants for human services.

And we're all glad we don't have to explain how Alabama works! We didn't hire an outsider. Robyn grew up in Pelham, fluent in Baptist (and now Spanish) and change-making. As to Arise, I'd say she "gets it" – she has that innate sense of how organizing, policy work and advocacy can work together to challenge Alabama to arise to its potential. So let's all pitch in and take Arise to a new level!

Yours in peace and hope,

Say hello to Mike and Cheryl!



Mike Nicholson
Southeast Alabama organizer

Please help us welcome both Mike Nicholson and Cheryl Myrick to Arise! Mike will join Presdelane Harris, Stan Johnson and Debbie Smith on our organizing team, and Cheryl will intern with Arise this summer.

Mike Nicholson will be the southeast Alabama organizer at Arise, working with member groups and low-income Alabamians in the Auburn/Opelika, Montgomery and Wiregrass regions, as well as other areas of southeast Alabama. Mike is a Prattville native with a B.A. in political science and sociology from the University of Montevallo, and he is now finishing up his doctorate in political science at the University of

Alabama. Mike enjoys spending time with his family and his dog, Sushi.

Cheryl Myrick will be a social work intern with Arise this



Cheryl Myrick
Arise intern

summer. Cheryl received a B.A. in social work from the University of Montevallo and is pursuing a master's degree in social service administration from Case Western Reserve University. She retired from the Boys & Girls Club of the River Region after 28 years as a unit director and now serves as youth director at First Baptist Church in Hope Hull. Cheryl is a Montgomery native who is passionate about service to others. She is the mother of a son and has two grandchildren, ages 8 and 14.

New executive director

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communications at the Birmingham-based nonprofits Urban Ministry and Alabama Possible. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology from Vanderbilt University.

"Alabama Arise's members are our state's most outspoken advocates for dignity, justice and power for people in poverty," Hyden said. "Arise is at the forefront of organizing grassroots advocacy, holding elected officials accountable and producing trusted policy analysis – work that is now more important than ever. I am honored and humbled to carry this work forward with Arise's amazing staff, members and board."

Arise Board President Cindy Lowry praised Hyden's track record in fundraising and organizing and touted her relationships with civic

organizations and faith-based groups across Alabama.

"Robyn has what we believe to be the right attributes – passion, commitment and professionalism – to lead this organization into the future," Lowry said. "As a former organizer for Arise, she knows the organization very well and has a vision that will build on our history and strengths. Through her words and actions, we know she is fully committed to Arise and our mission."

Forrister, Arise's outgoing director, also offered praise for Hyden.

"Robyn brings just what Arise needs: a vision for where we need to go, a vision grounded in deep relationships with a network of change-makers," Forrister said. "She's a collaborator. She listens. And she's thoughtful. She steps in at a time when our staff, board and membership are strong and eager to engage the issues of 2019."

Changes would leave millions of Americans poorer, hungrier

U.S. House rejects Farm Bill with SNAP cuts ... for now

By *Jim Carnes, policy director*

This month brought good news and bad news for defenders of food assistance that helps millions of struggling families make ends meet.

The good news is that the U.S. House on May 18 failed on its first attempt to pass a harsh, deeply partisan Farm Bill after adding amendments to make it even more punitive toward people in poverty. But the bad news is that House Republicans can call the amended bill back up at any time – and may try to do that in June. The Senate, meanwhile, is expected to consider a bipartisan Farm Bill later in the summer.

The House bill would deepen poverty and hurt the economy by imposing costly, unnecessary new paperwork requirements for millions of participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps). These changes would take food off the table for tens of thousands of families across Alabama, including children, seniors, parents, veterans, and people with disabilities. The new limits also would strike a painful blow to grocery stores, particularly in rural areas, that depend on SNAP participants for their trade.

Federal food assistance has been an integral part of comprehensive agricultural legislation since 1939, lifting millions of Americans out of poverty. The 2018 Farm Bill, in its

original House form, would have imposed program cuts and participation barriers that would seriously weaken the “safety net” that helps struggling families make ends meet.

The amended bill would tighten the screws on SNAP participants even further. For example, it would make it harder for states to get federal waivers for dire economic conditions. It also would slash the bill’s already meager funding for job training. And it would allow states to contract with private companies for core SNAP functions such as eligibility determination, not just technical operations.

Alabamians across the political spectrum have long agreed that we share a responsibility to keep our neighbors from going hungry. Arise members are urging Sens. Doug Jones and Richard Shelby, along with other members of the state’s congressional delegation, to oppose SNAP cuts that would hurt everyday Americans.

Our lawmakers instead should embrace a bipartisan Farm Bill that strengthens SNAP, supports our communities and makes meaningful investments in job training to give low-wage workers an opportunity to climb the economic ladder. Congress should abandon this effort to cut food aid for struggling families and return to our country’s long-standing bipartisan commitment to fighting hunger.

How SNAP limits would hurt Alabama’s children and rural communities

Policy analyst Carol Gundlach’s op-ed opposing the U.S. House Farm Bill’s proposed new requirements for SNAP participants appeared in news outlets across Alabama earlier this month. Here is an excerpt:

“SNAP is a proven success with a long history of bipartisan support and a strong track record of reducing hunger, creating jobs and supplementing wages. But the proposed Farm Bill would erode our shared commitment to fighting hunger. Instead, it would punish people who have very low incomes by slashing SNAP for as many as 2 million Americans, including tens of thousands of Alabama adults and their children.

“This misguided move would increase hunger, deepen poverty and take a heavy toll on our state’s economy and budgets. The cuts would hit especially hard in rural communities, where some stores would close without SNAP income. ... In Alabama alone, SNAP benefits are spent in more than 5,000 stores and contribute \$1.3 billion a year to the state economy.

“These proposed SNAP changes would hurt children, too. When parents lose food assistance because they can’t find a job or their work hours drop below an arbitrary minimum, their children are deprived of nutrition they need to grow and thrive. That makes it harder for children to succeed in school – and it’s simply cruel.”

Board president’s note

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process and has many great qualities that we know will make her a success in this role. As a former organizer for Arise, she knows the organization very well and has a vision that will build on our history and strengths. Through her words and actions, we know she is fully committed to Arise and our mission.

Robyn is an Alabama native, so there is no learning curve in understanding how things work here, both politically and culturally. Her successful track record as a fundraiser, organizer and professional with strong nonprofits like the United Way of Central Alabama and Urban Ministry will serve her well as our next leader. She also has strong connections and relationships with a variety of organizations across the state,

ranging from civic groups to faith-based and social justice organizations.

We are deeply appreciative of the leadership that Kimble has provided for Arise for nearly three decades. It is always challenging to transition from such a long-term, successful leader, but we feel we have found the best person for the job. We hope you will all join us in welcoming and supporting Robyn in leading our important work at Arise!

Donate by June 30 and more than triple your gift!



By Brenda Boman,
development director

How many opportunities do you get to turn \$1 into \$3.50? Well, here's one! Your

contributions to Arise between now and June 30 will help us raise the \$20,000 we need to match a \$50,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.

That's right: Every dollar you give will be matched by \$2.50. But we must raise the full amount by the end of June to secure the grant. You can help by mailing in a contribution in the reply envelope included with this newsletter. Or you can donate at arisecitizens.org if

you prefer to give online. While you're there, you can arrange for a monthly electronic fund transfer if you would like to give on a recurring basis.

Think of your support for our work as an investment in Alabama's future. It's money that will help

Alabamians understand that better public policies can help low-income people lift themselves out of poverty. And it's a way to help our state officials get the information they need to make decisions to move our state forward.

As leaders in the sixth poorest state in the nation, Alabama lawmakers need to focus their attention on legislation that will make a difference in the lives of nearly 1 million Alabamians who live

below the poverty line. The challenges facing our state will be great, and many of the people tasked with solving them will be new. When the Alabama Legislature's 2019 regular session convenes next March, nearly one-third of our state legislators will be newly elected to their positions. They'll face a steep learning curve.

With your help to secure this grant, Arise will be able to provide up-to-date, accurate and dependable policy research that new lawmakers will find helpful. And we'll be able to equip thousands of everyday Alabamians to advocate for meaningful change on issues that matter. Please give generously and help us continue our work to build a better Alabama for all.

Move could set stage for less funding in future **Trump urges \$7B federal CHIP cut**

By Jim Carnes, policy director

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which supports ALL Kids coverage in Alabama, faces a new challenge from the Trump administration after weathering the threat of termination last year. In early May, the White House asked Congress to rescind, or take back, \$7 billion in CHIP funding already allocated in the budget. The cut would be part of a \$15 billion domestic spending reduction to help offset last year's tax cuts for wealthy Americans.

Congress has until June 22 to approve the reduction by a simple majority vote in both chambers.

After the deadline, Senate approval would require 60 votes. Arise has joined hundreds of state and national organizations in signing a joint letter to Congress opposing the cuts.

More than 173,000 children in Alabama, including 85,000 on ALL Kids, depend on CHIP funding. The proposed cut would do major damage

to a rainy day account that helps protect CHIP against unexpected enrollment increases caused by economic downturns or natural disasters. Alabama knows all too well how suddenly calamities can occur, and it's essential to ensure that CHIP can afford to cover the kids who need it.

The proposed rescission could set the stage for lower federal support for CHIP in the future, as future funding levels are set based on prior years' spending. Breaking a bipartisan deal on CHIP also would have larger political implications. Violating this year's agreement would sound an alarm not just for CHIP but for the prospect of meaningful action on other vital issues facing Congress in the future.

Millions of American families, including tens of thousands across Alabama, already endured months of uncertainty after Congress let CHIP funding expire in 2017 before approving a 10-year extension. These hard-working parents deserve assurance that those worries are behind them.

Set up a listening session in your area!

Arise is listening, and your input can help shape our 2019 agenda. Right now, our organizers are planning summer listening sessions across Alabama to hear what you have to say about our issues and strategies for the next year. These discussions help inform the issue priorities that our members choose at the annual meeting each fall.

We want to know what you think, and we need to hear different perspectives, especially those of low-income folks. Too often, many Alabamians don't get a meaningful opportunity to voice their concerns about the issues that matter to them. But Arise is ready and eager to hear what you have to say.

Our organizers are seeking venues for listening sessions, and we invite you or your group to host one. Sessions usually take about an hour to 90 minutes, and we can schedule them on days, nights or weekends depending on your needs or preferences.

Call the Arise office at 334-832-9060 or email organizing director Presdelane Harris at pres@alarise.org to set up a listening session in your area today!