

Spector of child abuse is everyone's problem

It seems every day, another one happens. A defenseless baby either killed or maimed, a victim of child abuse.

It would be difficult to come up with a more heinous crime than that of killing an infant. Last year in the supposed Land of the Free, 1,338 children died from child abuse — half under the age of one.

Lane County is not immune from the epidemic. In the past 14 months, four children were killed and another horribly injured. Need more evidence? Between 1985-91, Oregon averaged 15 child abuse deaths per year. In 1992, that number has already been reached, and we haven't even gotten to the halfway point.

What is going on?

It seems the more focus put on child abuse and the more we understand the psychological and environmental reasons for it, the more it happens. Most likely, as we get a deeper awareness of the problem, we're finally recognizing the true amount of child abuse cases.

There aren't necessarily more occurrences — we just aren't passing the blame off on "accidents" or any such nonsense anymore.

So what can be done? Is more governmental oversight needed? Is increased bureaucracy the answer?

No. Increasing the system would make it more unwieldy than it already is. What needs to happen is more communication between the schools, police and social workers — the people who traditionally deal with child abuse cases.

The symptoms of a potential abuser are quite easy to see. Poverty, alcohol or drug abuse, and a history of domestic violence are just some of them. Put people in stressful situations, add the pressure of a newborn child, and disaster might not be far behind.

But child abuse happens regardless of social strata. It happens among everybody. Blaming it on a small segment of the population, as some are apt to do, is pointless, careless and just plain stupid.

As an individual, take a pro-active stance regarding child abuse. If you see a suspected case, report it to the authorities. If you have children and know you have a temper, seek counseling *before* it becomes a problem. Recognize your own shortcomings and see that they don't impact your children.

In addition, pressure the local, state and national governments. Convince the politicians this is an issue that needs to be addressed. Let them know if they do nothing about it, they won't be politicians much longer.

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OPINION

Perot's buffets win hands down



For the past three months, everybody has been so serious.

It's election time, and all queries run to the same tune. What's your stance? What do you think about this issue? And so on.

All are valuable questions, but there comes a time when the seriousness needs to stop.

Election night, for instance. I really do love politics. To me, election night is like a gigantic sporting event without the Astroturf. Drama, come-from-behind victories, cheering crowds.

So where else would I be on Tuesday night except down at the Lane County Fairgrounds, scoping out the election scene. And while my fellow journalists (worthy, one and all) were busy asking the important "issue questions," I had a little more time to focus on another aspect of election night:

The food.

If you've never been down to an election headquarters, I'll give you a piece of advice. Go hungry. Some of the spreads the candidates put out were unbelievable.

Some went for the basic popcorn and chips while other indulged in cheese squares, fruit or vegetables. And I, with nothing better to do, graded the candidates on their food selection.

So without further chit-chat, here are the First Annual Peters Election Night Snack Awards:

First Place — hands down to the Ross Perot campaign. These people went all out, renting one of the side rooms off of the convention hall. A varied buffet spread, pleasing to eye and palate.

It must have been expensive. I asked Jim Hale, one of the local coordinators for the Perot campaign, if good ol' Ross had kicked in for the grub.

"No," Hale said. "Perot hasn't spent a dime in Oregon.

We just wanted to have a party to get to know each other."

And if Perot gets on the ballot in November?

"We'll be back," Hale said.

A small suggestion, Ross: Texas barbecue. \$100 million can go a long way.

Floor Award — City Council candidate Tom Slocum. The Slocum campaign went healthy, opting for fruit over deli slices.

Was the healthy approach a campaign theme?

"I don't think so," Slocum said. "But after climbing up and down hill and dale during the campaign, we needed healthy food."

Twins — State Rep. Sam Dominy and state Sen. Bill Dwyer. The two camps had identical food choices — cheese, crackers, chips and salsa. Coincidence, collaboration or conspiracy? Is this the start of another political scandal? Catergater, perhaps?

Mike Dubick, Dominy's campaign manager, denied any connection with the Dwyer group.

"We just went conservative," Dubick said.

Conservative? A Democrat in Lane County?

"Only on the money we spent," Dubick said.

Others were more pragmatic about their choices. County commissioners Jerry Rust and Jack Roberts, who both won reelection, said campaign workers had picked out the food.

"I'm at the mercy of my handlers in food matters," Roberts said.

"How much can you get for a \$100?" Rust said, defending his fruit, chips and salsa spread.

The pass-it-off-on-the-campaign-workers strategy was used a lot. Mayoral candidate Mary Burrows (popcorn, chips, cookies) said if it had been up to her, "we would have had more cheese."

"I don't know how to choose food," she admitted. "I leave the big decisions like that to

'I'm not a chip person because then you have to bring dip, and it just goes on and on.'

— Debra Ehrman candidate

others."

Debra Ehrman, running for district court judge, was the only candidate to break away from the chip rut. She brought pretzels.

"I've always been a pretzel fan," she said. "I'm not a chip person because then you have to bring dip, and it just goes on and on."

Some candidates didn't bother with food. Mayoral candidate Izzy Whetstone passed out buttons, not brie.

"I came down here after dinner," Whetstone said. "I just didn't want to eat any more."

However, I didn't rely solely on my tastes to hand out the awards. After a careful screening process, I was able to find two impartial observers and asked them to make a "best food" choice.

"Ruth Bascom," said outgoing mayor Jeff Miller. "She definitely had the best salsa."

Chris Chandler, a reporter for KVAL-TV, said she hadn't eaten anything, but from a purely visual stance, state Rep. candidate Cynthia Wooten was the winner.

"Hers was the best," Chandler said. "She brought cheese and crackers. That whole chip thing—not."

And there you have it.

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