

Groups fight youth violence law in Washington

SEATTLE (AP) — An effort to combat youth violence through local control over programs designed to keep youngsters out of trouble is being branded a bureaucratic boondoggle by municipal and county officials.

Criticism of the new state law centers on a provision that establishes 53 community public health and safety networks covering the state.

By Thursday, each is supposed to have a 23-member citizen governing board to review government-funded programs, decide what is the most troublesome and frequently occurring misconduct among local youngsters and what should be done to prevent it. Some boards have requested extensions.

By January 1996 each board is supposed to submit a strategy plan, complete with violence reduction goals, to the state Family Policy Council.

The Seattle Times reported Sunday that most of those named to the panels so far are government, education and social service officials — those responsible for existing programs — rather than citizens at large.

In addition, the Washington State Association of Counties and Association of Washington Cities say the boards could usurp the legitimate power of local government.

"Our feeling is that if people feel like counties aren't doing their jobs, or the cities, or the schools, then fix them," said Jean Wessman, lobbyist for the county group. "Don't create another bureaucratic organization."

The organization is seeking an amendment to the law to limit the scope of the boards to intervention and prevention programs and their power to advice and planning.

Other critics of the new law say it sets deadlines that can't be met, provides inadequate direction from the state, lacks start-up funds, fails to assure minority representation and could pose legal problems.

Vagueness is a common complaint. "I would say that the original intent is probably pretty good, that we need to look at the needs of individual kids and to work with whole families," said David Okimoto, director of the Atlantic Street Center in Seattle, "but I think the legislation that put this together was not well thought out in terms of how it would be implemented."

Local experiences range widely. Clark County officials say they won't participate until questions over decision-making authority and legal liability are resolved.

There is more enthusiasm in the Snoqualmie Valley network, which covers North Bend, Snoqualmie, Fall City, Carnation and Duvall in King County east of the Seattle suburbs.

"There's a huge consensus that the way things have been working isn't that great and we probably can't do any worse than that — and maybe we can do a lot better," said Joan Sharp, director of Children's Services of Sno-Valley.

Pat Aaby, a network organizer in Snohomish County, said the idea was greeted as an opportunity to escape from urban domination, although a lot of improvisation has been required.

"We understand the intent of this legislation is to try to get government to reach out to grass-roots people," Aaby said, "but if you're not careful, you can create a grass-roots bureaucracy."

Professional wrestler found dead in home in Springfield

SPRINGFIELD (AP) — Authorities on Saturday were investigating the death of professional wrestler Arthur Leon Barr, who was found dead in his home earlier last week.

Barr's body was discovered in his bed Wednesday by his mother, Gloria Jeanne Abston, Springfield police said.

Barr, 28, who wrestled under the names of "Beetle-juice," "The Juicer" and "Love Machine," had returned to Springfield from Mexico on Nov. 22 to pick up his son, Dexter Neal Barr.

Abston, who said she had picked up Barr at the airport, told police that Barr had come to her apartment to get his son and had not com-

plained of any health problems and did not seem depressed or suicidal. Abston told police that Barr seemed happy to be home but tired.

There were no obvious signs of trauma and an investigation was continuing.

Abston told police that she had tried to call Barr all day Wednesday and after not getting any answer, she went to his home. She said she knocked on the door but no one came. So she walked to the bedroom window, where she saw Barr on his waterbed, partially covered with blankets, and his son lying asleep next to him.

Abston said she pounded on the window, waking up Dexter, who then let her in.

Telemarketers get caught in scam

SPOKANE (AP) — When Gloria Warrick learned her elderly mother had fallen victim to fraudulent telemarketers, she wasn't content to simply help her mother learn to say no to slick sales pitches.

She went after the scam artists, playing detective and gathering information to file complaints.

Now, her work is paying off. The 48-year-old Spokane County woman has filed 30 complaints in 11 states this year against telemarketing companies and has recovered about \$15,000 of her mother's losses.

More importantly, Warrick said, she has alerted legal authorities and helped them build cases against scam artists.

"I want people to know you can get results from complaining," Warrick said. "The whole point isn't how much she got back. It's that those guys got stopped."

Warrick's widowed mother began falling victim to telemarketing scams a few years ago.

Warrick went through her mother's canceled checks and found she'd paid nearly \$50,000 to telemarketing firms for cosmetics, coin collections and junk jewelry in hopes of winning prizes that in some cases didn't exist.

"To me, it's a form of brainwashing," Warrick said.

Warrick asked that her 80-year-old mother not be identified because she fears another rash of calls from telemarketers.

For three months, Warrick took her mother's phone calls and collected information while pretending to be her mother.

"I think this is atypical in terms of the intensity of this woman," said Janice March, a spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office.

Many of Warrick's complaints went nowhere because she lacked sufficient information about the company or the people involved in the business could no longer be found.

But other firms quickly settled after learning of the complaints. Others paid up after being sued.

In one case, the state attorney general sued U.S. Against Drugs, a Las Vegas-based telemarketing operation. In addition to collecting \$7,500 from U.S. Against Drugs for two victims, including Warrick's mother, the state won \$2,000 in civil penalties and \$2,000 in legal fees.

U.S. Against Drugs promised valuable prizes for financial donations, but the prizes turned out to be inexpensive items such as first aid kits or children's books, Warrick said.

In addition, the firm wasn't registered with the state as a charitable organization as required by law.

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