

Children First Releases Report Card On Status Of Children, Overall Grade Is C-

Children First for Oregon, the state's child advocacy organization, released its first annual Report Card on the Status of Oregon's Children today. The overall grade was a C-

The group rated five broad categories and a total of fourteen specific child status indicators. The categories and grades were:

- Safety C (child abuse, violent crime)
- Investing In Families D (child poverty, child support, health uninsured)
- Early Childhood C+ (child care, infant mortality, low birthweight)
- Teen Years D (teen pregnancy/birth, drug/alcohol/tobacco use, arrests/incarceration, and suicide homicide)
- Education C (school drop-out, academic performance)

Carol Metzler, Children First President from Eugene, stated, "This Report Card sounds an alarm that should motivate each of us to action. Whether the issue is child poverty, child care, child abuse, or teen births we are not valuing our children. Oregon's economic, social and political future depends on the well-being of our children and families."

Metzler added, "Thousands of Report Cards will be distributed across the state to increase public awareness and galvanize citizen action. Prior to the November election, it will include a postcard aimed at candidates for public office. It asks the candidate to mail back a copy of their children's platform. As voters, we need to know what a candidate will do, if elected, to improve the status of Oregon's

children." She continued, "The Report Card will be a focal point for November regional meetings where citizens will help Children First develop an action agenda for the 1993 session of the Oregon legislature."

Leticia Maldonado, a Children First Board member from Beaverton, stated, "Action is needed on all levels and the Oregon legislature is one part of the solution. In the upcoming session, Children First will focus on two things: (1) the need for a Children's Impact Statement to evaluate the effect of budget proposals and child-related legislation on children and families, and (2) the proposed state budget's impact on children. We will call on the legislature to embrace and implement this agenda to benefit all children and families."

The Report Card found that: Child abuse occurs at an alarming rate in Oregon, with reports increasing by 41% since 1984.

15 of all children live in poverty, an increase of 27% since 1980. 45% of children living in families headed by a single woman are poor.

The supply of child care spaces falls dramatically short of the need, creating a statewide supply gap of 86,000 spaces.

In 1990 only 17% of child support due children was actually collected, resulting in nearly \$400,000,000 unpaid.

Teen birth rates continue to skyrocket, with an increase of 33% since 1985.

If current trends continue, one-quarter of this year's 9th graders will drop-out before their class graduates in 1996. There were some positive signs, also. Rates of infant mortality and low birthweight babies are coming down, and the same is true for drug, alcohol

and tobacco use.

The Report Card found that major ethnic groups are disproportionately represented in these figures for example:

Although infant mortality is decreasing overall, the 1990 African-American rate was 88% higher than for whites.

Children of color are twice as likely to be growing up in poverty as are white children.

The drop-out rate for Hispanic students is more than double that of whites, meaning that 60% of this year's Hispanic 9th graders will not graduate with their classmates.

Metzler added, "Government action is only one part of the answer. Children First affirms the role of the family as the primary source of support for children and is dedicated to strengthening the family unit - in all of its current shapes and sizes."

She called on Oregonians to increase the time and effort they devote to children. Examples cited were encouraging a child's love for reading and academic success, volunteering at a neighborhood school, or attending parenting class so that Oregon's children achieve in school and are prepared to succeed in life.

Portland area businessman Al Jubitz, owner of Jubitz Truck Stop, added, "This Report Card challenges employers to examine how our companies are meeting the needs of workers who are parents. We need workplaces that are more family-friendly. If Oregon's economic future is to grow and succeed all of us must invest in children and strengthen families - now."

Copies of the Report Card are available by calling Children First toll-free statewide at 800-544-0376 or writing Children First for Oregon, P.O. Box 23519, Portland, Or. 97281.

Multnomah County Commissioners Proclaim Child Health Week

In conjunction with the U.S. Congress' declaration of Child Health Day on October 5, The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners will proclaim the week of October 5-9 "Child Health Week." The purpose of this proclamation, according to Billi Odegaard, Director of the County's Health Department, "is to raise public awareness of the need for preventive health care and inform parents about specific things they can do to protect their children from injury, disease, and death."

In Multnomah County, Child Health Week Activities will target parents of young children to promote immunizations, well child exams, use of child safety seats and seat belts, health screenings, nutrition, and home safety. Educational materials will be distributed and special events have been scheduled at Multnomah County's primary care clinics to disseminate information on these topics. The Northeast Health Center has scheduled a noontime presentation addressing safety and

protecting children in the home.

The Southeast Health Center will hold a Children's Health fair on October 7. A primary focus of Child Health Week will be to emphasize the need for immunizing preschool children. Immunization rates are significantly lower in the U.S. than in most developed countries. According to the National Vaccine Advisory Committee, the U.S. polio immunization rate ranked 15th internationally and 49th when the U.S. nonwhite population immunization rate was compared with nations' overall rates. In Multnomah County, Health Department data indicates that only 55% of the County's children under two years old have been immunized.

Other indicators of the state of children's health include injuries and death due to accidents, incidence of poisonings, burns, and the noticeable increase in deaths due to house fires. Indicators would also include child abuse and communicable disease reports.

Key Multnomah County indicators of the need for improved preventive health services are:

A significant percentage of Multnomah County children have rotten or disintegrating teeth, also referred to as dental caries. 95% are caries free at age 6 but by age 18, 82% of children have caries in their permanent teeth.

A large number of children are riding unrestrained in automobiles or are improperly restrained. Only 28% of infants under one year old are properly restrained.

At present Oregon rates, one of every twenty-six babies born this year will be hospitalized or killed by age 18 due to automobile, motorcycle, and bicycle-related injuries.

12 of every 1000 Oregon children are affected by child abuse.

The theme of Child Health Week is "For Kids Sake" and is intended to provide a focus for preventive health care services provided year round by the County Health Department.

"ALONG THE COLOR LINE" Rich Schools VS. Poor Schools

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

Four years ago, George Bush promised the American people that he would become "the education president." Bush's Education Secretary Lamar Alexander likes to boast the U.S. spends a "significant" amount of its national wealth on public school. Yet in reality, for twelve years the Reagan-Bush administrations have waged warfare against the promise of educational equality. The chief casualties in this assault against public schools are minorities and the poor.

First, let's separate Bush's educational polemics from actual programs. According to a recent report of the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, U.S. spending for education lags behind the majority of western industrial nations. Out of twenty industrial countries, the U.S. ranks only Thirteenth in its per capita public spending for education. Smaller countries like the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark invest far more in their schools than we do. Children in Japan attend school nearly sixty more days each year than their American counterparts, and score much higher in math and science. Japanese schools have a dropout rate of only 10 percent, compared to 27 percent in the U.S.

The deepest chasm of educational inequality separates America's largest urban school systems from the more privileged, elitist schools in the suburbs. According to a recent study by the Council of Great City Schools, the forty

seven largest urban school districts spend about \$5,200 per pupil, which is nearly one thousand dollars less than suburban schools spend per student. But what's even more significant than the difference in funding levels, is how these monies are allocated and the racial and class profile of the students who are being served.

These forty seven large urban school systems are all located in cities with more than 250,000 people. These school systems have disproportionately large populations of color, and many students with special needs. These schools are responsible for only 13 percent of the nation's total school enrollment, but they have 32 percent of all Latino children and 37 percent of all African-American students. They also have 25 percent of all children living below the federal government's poverty line, and 32 percent of all students with limited English ability. Such schools must siphon greater funds for health services, instruction in the English language, and remedial educational programs than suburban schools. Less money is left over for teachers' salaries, textbooks, libraries, new equipment, and computers.

Why has the Bush administration done little to close the fiscal disparity between struggling urban schools with deteriorating tax bases, and the comfortable suburban schools, which draw their students from the middle and upper classes? There's no question that race is a major reason for these differences. Less than one in four students who currently attend large urban school districts are white. The forty seven largest city schools only educate five percent of the country's white children. Perhaps this is the reason that Bush can ignore the fact that less than 40 percent of urban students who now enter junior year have passed basic algebra. If one's racial politics include Willie Horton and bashing affirmative action, it is not surprising that the Bush agenda is "color blind" to the educational difficulties of the inner city.

Education is one of the few bridges which exists that can help to lead people from poverty, homelessness and illiteracy to the promise of a better life. We need to broaden that bridge with massive federal initiatives, which can improve the quality of ghetto schools, giving millions of Black, Latino, and Asian-american youth a better chance for opportunity and equality.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of Political Science and History at the University of Colorado-Boulder. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 250 publications, and is broadcast by more than 60 radio stations internationally.

Zoo Boo Darkens The Night

Portland beware! Ghosts, goblins and grotesque creatures will soon be haunting the West Hills. Come October 14, things that go bump in the night will begin scaring the wits out of visitors to the Metro Washington Park Zoo's Bank of America ZooBoo.

In addition to Bank of America and KINK FM 102, ZooBoo is made possible by hundreds of volunteers, many of whom are members of the Oregon Media Production Association. OMPA members and friends have joined to make ZooBoo the premiere Halloween event in the region.

Bank of America ZooBoo features a frightful ride on the zoo's train, which travels along a perilous one-mile route teeming with scary theater sets, unexpected special effects and monstrous actors terrifying unsuspecting visitors. Zoo staff and volunteers, and professionals from Portland's theater, television and motion picture industries have joined together to create the event, titled "Media Nightmare."

"Media Nightmare" revolves around the dreams (i.e. - nightmares) of

a little boy named Bobby, a TV/junk food junkie, who has stayed up too late, eaten far too much junk food and has watched way too much television. Train riders follow Bobby's dreams as he flips from channel to channel, watching horror movies, even more horrible TV commercials, and television favorites such as game shows and interviews by talk show hosts.

But the train ride is only part of the action. Zoo volunteers have organized activities for visitors waiting their turn on the train. Classic horror films, Halloween stories, (mis)fortune telling and learning "What's So Scary" about snakes, spiders, owls and other animals nobody likes will take place in the zoo entrance area.

Because the train ride is not recommended for children age five and under, little ones can also participate in Halloween and animal games, make masks, and listen to librarians and story tellers read children's Halloween tales.

Three videos which set the stage the event's story line will showcase some of the newest innovations in tele-

vision and motion picture special effects. The videos, produced by members and associates of OMPA, will feature sound and video effects such as Claymation and morphing. Morphing is a new technique combining a series of computer blended images, which when played at normal film speeds, simulates one image turning into another. Portland's own Tom Peterson will be featured in one of the morphing scenes.

Bank of America ZooBoo runs from October 14 to November 1. Gates open at 6p.m. and close at 9:45 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays and 10:45 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Tickets are \$5 for adults age 12 to 64, and \$3 for children age three to 11 and for seniors age 64 and over. Because the train ride is not recommended for children age five and under, tickets for the front entrance plaza activities only are \$2 for adults and \$1 for children and seniors.

Tickets can be purchased in advance with an additional 50c fee at any G.I. Joe's Ticketmaster outlets and at the zoo beginning October 1. No Phone orders will be taken.



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