

**Pedestrian Safety  
Do's And Don'ts**

# Who Will Care For Our Children?

In Milwaukee's inner city, a program that teaches parents how to handle their frustrations is helping keep their children away from drugs. In Boston a team of nurses takes time to help parents who have children with disabilities make a smooth transition into school. And in rural Tennessee, a publicity campaign directed toward parents is providing information on the benefits children with disabilities are eligible to receive from Supplemental Security Income.

Although these RWJF-funded programs are as diverse as the areas they serve, all three and children by reaching out to the people who best understand their needs—parents.

The result is better care for the children from caregivers who learn through parents how to best meet the families' needs.

Consider the case of Sue Hammond. For two years, she stood by helplessly as her son was taken repeatedly from her home and sent away to a psychiatric hospital.

"I felt like I had no part in what happened with my son," she said. "It was very frustrating."

That changed two and a half years ago when the Kentucky homemaker's son was accepted into RAWJF's Mental Health Services Program for Youth (MHSPY). The program brings together the child's mental health professionals was a team, with the parents as key players.

"Now," says Hammond, "if I

think my son needs in-home therapy, one-on-one or group therapy, (the professionals) listen. They take my advice first."

That approach has kept her 13-year-old son out of the hospital and home with his family for the last two and a half years.

With projects in eight states, the five-year, \$20.4 million Mental Health Services Program for Youth is the largest privately funded children's mental health project in the country.

Those involved in the program are reforming mental health care by uniting into a team the health and social service professional that treat each child. This approach is directed at keeping children with their families, away from the foster care system and institutions.

Parents are brought onto the team because "they have more commitment to the child than anybody in the (mental health) system," explained Eleanor McLean, coordinator for the MHSPY project in Dane County, Wis.

For Hammond and other parents, caring for an emotionally disturbed child at home is challenging, but the RWJF project helps ease the task by offering professional advice and support meetings.

Parents Join Fight Against Drugs

No parent can protect his or her child from the temptation of drugs and alcohol. Yet parents greatly influence their children's decisions through their own values.



An RWJF kid, part of the non-profit organization's interactive disability program

Milwaukee's Fighting Back project helps inner-city parents through its support group and education programs.

"parents need to learn to talk to their kids so they understand what they're going through," explained James Mosley, project director for Milwaukee County Fighting Back

## Dog Houses Now Available

The Oregon Humane Society's annual dog house drive has netted about 40 houses which are available to people who need shelter for their outdoor dogs.

People interested in obtaining a dog house can contact the Society at 285-7722 ext. 217 Monday through Friday and ext. 200 on Saturdays to Sundays. There is no charge for dog houses. The Society can also provide plans for an inexpensive, simple to build house for those who want to construct their own.

Dog houses can be picked up at the Oregon Humane Society at 1067 NE Columbia Blvd. in Portland during regular business hours 11am to 7pm Monday through Friday and 10am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday.

"They help shape their children's values to make good decisions."

The Milwaukee program is one of 14 RWJF-funded Fighting Back projects across the country. RWJF began funding the \$26.4 million, five-year initiative in 1992.

Each Fighting Back project is a community-wide effort to bring to-

gether groups interested in fighting drug abuse, from police, politicians and business leaders to minister, teachers and youth groups. Law officers and business leaders learn to be sensitive to teens, while teens and parents learn how to work with community leaders. Such cooperation brought anti-drug messages to 60 billboards in Milwaukee, after parents complained to billboard owners that signs for alcohol and cigarettes promoted abuse.

"We're attempting to help people think comprehensively," Mosley explained. "Fighting Back enables the community to build the kind of plan that fits the community."

### Education Campaign Brings More Health Benefits To Children

The Campaign reaches out to parents of chronically ill children through social worker, therapists and other caregivers. Campaign leaders inform these professionals that a 1990 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court has opened the door to SSI for hundreds of thousand of children who previously were ineligible.

Most children who receive SSI also receive free medical care through Medicaid.

Partly because of this effort, the number of children receiving SSI increased 40 percent in 1992. In a changing environment of health care reform, these programs already are showing how to improve the way we care for children most in need.

### PEDESTRIANS SHOULD:

1. Continue to cross a street if the Don't Walk sign begins flashing while you are in the crosswalk, but do not start crossing, because you will not have time to cross safely.

2. Be alert to turning traffic even if you have a Walk signal at an intersection.

3. Avoid jogging or walking in the street if sidewalks are provided.

4. Walk on the left, facing traffic, on two-lane roads where there are no sidewalks.

5. Wear retroreflective materials or carry a flashlight if you walk at night. Wearing white at night, while helpful when traffic is moving at speeds below 35 mph, does not make you safe when traffic is flowing at a higher speed.

### DRIVERS SHOULD:

1. Wait until you pass an End School Zone sign or a sign indicating an increased speed limit before you resume normal speed.

2. Realize that the advance pedestrian crossing sign and the advance school crossing signs are placed 100 or more feet from a crosswalk to warn you that a pedestrian crossing is ahead.

3. Be alert if you see the crossing sign, which has lines at the feet of the figures, because it signals a crosswalk, in which pedestrians have the right-of-way.

# NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

## A Homeless Couple

This holiday season celebrates one of Christianity's most sacred days - Christmas - the mass celebrating the birth of Christ. For most Americans, this is a holiday time. The children are home from school; the parents from work. Families gather; friends frolic. Frenzied shopping and frantic pastries mark the season.

Yet, we should not let this holy day be reduced simply to a holiday. Last week, a national survey of 26 major cities found that the number of homeless families with children seeking food and shelter had increased 30% this year. Families are now over 40% of the homeless. These tend to be young people who have lost their jobs, their homes and their bearings.

What does this have to do with Christmas? In a sense, it is the point of the story.

Christmas is really about a homeless couple. It is about Mary, a teenage mother and her husband, Joseph, a poor carpenter, struggling to survive under occupation. Although she was with child, they were ordered to travel far to report for a census. They had no right to vote, but they would have to pay taxes. A homeless couple.

They traveled to Bethlehem where they had no place to stay. The innkeeper looked at their tattered garments and told them there was no room. Business was good; he had no time for the poor. Of course, if he had known who Mary was carrying, he would have offered his own bed. But he could not see the hope in the homeless couple.

Mary had the baby outdoors, in the stable. There was no heat. It was not weatherized. Straw provided the carpet. She wrapped the Child in a blanket and placed Him in a manger. The baby might have died, but the stars aligned in the night to provide light and warmth.

What is Christmas about? It is not about Christmas cards, for they stayed alone in the cold stable. It isn't about going into debt to buy gifts for the children, for they had no money. It is about a homeless couple.

It is also about a people living under cruel occupation. Their lives were scarred by poverty, struggle and war. They built up a tremendous expectation that God would send a savior, a messiah, to deliver them from their oppression. "And He will be called Wise Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace... And the government shall rest upon His shoulders."

This was insurrection. No wonder Herod, the local governor, was uneasy. Nothing is more frightening to a corrupt elite than an independent leader. That is why the Haitian generals so fear Father Aristide. He is not perfect, but he is independent. In Jesus' time, corrupt elites used spies to spread false rumors to try to discredit Him, just as the CIA has tried to do with Father Aristide. Christmas is about fundamental challenge to an unjust order.

Yet Christ came not on a chariot in golden armor, as many expected,

but as a baby, born in a stable to a homeless couple. With all the expectation about a mighty deliverer, the question was whether people would miss the message and messenger because of the package he came in.

Wise men - men of wisdom - left their flocks, followed the stars to honor the new king. They understood - even when the star led them to the stable - that the Savior had come. If He had been born in Herod's house, He would have been, He was born among the poor, the displaced, and wise men came to honor the homeless couple and the newborn Child.

We can't let the froth of the holiday blind us to the sustenance of the Holy day. Christmas is about a homeless couple. If only the innkeeper had known, we think, but that is not the point. We must place our hopes in every baby. We must insure that each child has a chance to fulfill his or her potential. It should not matter whether the father is unemployed or the mother is young, or the couple is without shelter. We cannot know what genius lies within each soul, so we must affirm that all.

And as He taught us we must turn from petty politics of maneuver, of cynicism and positioning, and embrace a powerful movement of principle. Protect the babies in the dawn of life. Care for the sick; shelter the homeless. Work for the promise of peace without end. Challenge the unjust and the callous. That's the point. Merry Christmas!

## Tragic Fire Often Preventable

Although on the decline, tragic fires still occur far too often in the City of Portland. Fires begin in a variety of ways. Approximately 8% of the time (or about one in twelve) children are the cause, much like the deadly fire that left a Portland mother dead early Christmas morning. Children cause an average of one half million dollars in property loss each year and child set fires will cause, on average, one death each year (sometimes the child and sometimes others). These figures apply to the City of Portland only.

What happened to this family cannot be changed. What may happen to other families can be influenced if the necessary respect for, and awareness of, fire issues is understood by both Parents and Children, primarily parents.

Children, particularly young children, are dependent upon their parents to create a safe environment. A safe environment means one free of deadly or dangerous items. A list of such things might be guns, knives household chemicals, strangers, and Matches and Lighters. The single

greatest contributing factor to children misusing fire is Availability. Most children who accidentally start fires do so with matches and lighters they found within their home.

The Portland Fire Bureau offers a program to assist parents in educating their children about the dangers of fire. Over 2,500 children and their parents have participated over the past eight years. Although the program is very effective, it is only able to respond after an incident has occurred, which is often too late. If parents follow a few basic guidelines relating to fire, hundreds of unnecessary fires along with injuries and death could be avoided.

### PARENT GUIDELINES FOR FIRE SAFETY

1. Keep matches and lighters out of sight, reach, and unavailable to all children. Better yet, remove them from the home completely if matches and lighters have no common uses.

2. Treat matches and lighters like the dangerous tools that they are and treat them with the appropriate respect.

3. Lead by example. Children cannot be expected to treat fire with any more respect than the respect they see parents give it. Actions speak louder than words.

4. Explain to children why it is not okay to use fire. "Don't" rarely gives children the information they need to make the "right" decisions.

5. Reward and/or praise children when they do the right things with fire, rather than only punish when the wrong behavior occurs.

6. Encourage your child's school to emphasize fire and life safety issues. A fire and life safety curriculum is available to all schools in the State of Oregon and fire agencies are available to help them. There is no better learning environment than the child's school.

If these guidelines prove ineffective, the Portland Fire Bureau, as well as most fire agencies throughout Oregon and Washington, offer programs to help families get to the root of their child's fire related problems. In Portland contact our Juvenile Firesetter Program at 823-3806. Fire safety starts at home.

## Crime Stoppers Case For The Week Of December 27, 1993: Arson

Portland Police Bureau and Portland Fire Bureau Arson investigators, in cooperation with Crime Stoppers and the Oregon Council Against Arson, are asking for your help in identifying and apprehending the suspect or suspects responsible for intentionally setting fire to a commercial building.

On Monday, November 29, 1993, at 3:17 in the morning, the Portland Fire Bureau responded to a report of a fire at Dot's Cafe, 2521 SE Clinton. Upon arrival fire fighters found the building, which housed Dot's Cafe and two other businesses, engulfed in smoke and fire. Damage to the struc-

ture and contents was estimated at \$450,000.

While the fire, which was determined to have been intentionally set, damaged all three businesses occupying the building, Arson investigators believe the "target" of the arson fire was Dot's Cafe.

Crime Stoppers, in cooperation with the Oregon Council Against Arson, is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information reported to Crime Stoppers, that leads to an arrest in this case and you need not give your name. Call Crime Stoppers at (503) 823-HELP.

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