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Kids Hurdle Challenges Of Work And School

Weekdays begin at 6:45 a.m. for high school junior Michael Davis when he catches the school bus. Most of them don't end until 10 p.m.

Michael doesn't march in the band, play football or participate in extracurricular clubs at school. Instead, Michael spends his after-school hours earning a paycheck.

Michael, 17, has been checking and bagging groceries since the end of July, when he decided to save up to buy a car. He hopes to have enough by the end of October.

"Everything goes straight to the bank," says Michael, who is eyeing a 1970 Camaro SS.

After he gets the car, Michael says he'll use his paycheck to pay for insurance and gas.

Michael is not alone. To pay for the "necessities" of life — cars, clothes, pagers and dates — a growing number of teenagers are taking part-time jobs.

A robust economy and low unemployment means workers are in demand — and teens are prime targets for employers in the fast-food and retail industries.

Higher wages are drawing more teens into the work force.

And with the school year kicking into gear, some of them are facing tough times balancing the demands of school and work. Some quit or scale back hours, forcing employers to scramble for replacements. Others tough it out.

Junior Kenetra Moore starts her homework on breaks from her cashier duties and she completes the rest when she gets home at 10 p.m. Kenetra works three days during the week; the other two days, she participates in a step-dancing group at school.

"The toughest thing about working and going to school is when I have a lot of homework and I have to work late," says Kenetra, 16. She says she hasn't turned in any assignments late and maintains an "A" average.

"I've been working since I was 14. I don't like to sit around. I like to keep busy and stay out of trouble," says Kenetra, who started working to buy a 1990 Mitsubishi Mirage.

While some kids work to supplement family incomes, many who work do so for spending money. Kenetra spends her paycheck on gas, clothes and "hanging out with friends."

That worries some guidance counselors. "If a student doesn't have to work, they shouldn't," said Pat Douthit, a head high school guidance counselor.

"You ask them what do they spend their money on, most of them will say cars, car insurance, gas, clothes — these are the things they want when they hit the magical age of 16."

Kids who quit because they are overwhelmed do so reluctantly. "We just had one kid who quit because of school. He was so upset, because he found out he can't do both. He felt he was letting us down," says Shannon Blackburn, manager of a food store.

"Some kids are involved in band or in sports and I think a lot of kids find out that they just can't do it," says Blackburn.

Blackburn says she tries to work around kids' school commitments. "If they have a good excuse, like 'I had band practice,' or 'I was in a wreck,' we're pretty understanding," Blackburn says.

Still, Blackburn says she always prepares for a mass exodus of students at the start of the school year. Blackburn lost a handful of students when the school year started last month. Another five high school workers took leaves of absence until next summer. "Every year, two or three weeks before school starts, we hang up a memo saying, 'Give us your school schedules now,'" Blackburn says. "We know we'll have to go on a hiring spree."

With a few exceptions, kids under 14 cannot legally work. Kids of any age can work as models and actors. They may also work in their parents' business — as long as the job doesn't involve serving or selling alcohol or dangerous machinery or hazardous conditions.

Kids of any age can perform domestic jobs such as casual baby-sitting and yard work without a permit.



Dan Barker of Home Gardening Project stops by to check the harvest opportunities at one household in Northeast Portland Thanks to annual donations from Pacific Power, the Home Gardening Project has built and planted over 1,200 vegetable gardens in Portland. The gardens benefit disadvantaged, low income or single-parent families so they can grow, maintain and harvest their own gardens. Pacific Power is a division of PacifiCorp, which serves 1.3 million electric customers in seven western states. (Photograph left to right: Dan Barker, Sky Briggs, Denice Briggs and Noel Briggs)

Gang Lies Addressed In Book

After fifteen years on the Austin police Department, Mike Knox had seen enough about kids in street gangs to write a book. And he did just that.

"The police officer is the last and weakest link in this ugly web of gangs and juvenile crime," explains Knox, now a popular speaker on the subject of gang prevention and a special trainer to the police. "Parents and school officials have to wake up and take action now, before it's too late."

Knox helped create the Houston Police Department's Westside Command Division Gang Unit in 1988. He has taught gang recognition and investigation at the Houston Police Academy, University of Houston, and the Houston Drug Enforcement Agency. He says youths are being drawn into gangs in an almost natural process. He wrote his new book to help blow the whistle on this process.

"There are three big lies which pull kids into street gangs," says Knox in his eye-opening new book, "Gangsta in the House" (\$12.95 from Momentum Books, 6964 Crooks Road, Troy, MI 48098).

Lie #1: The gang will provide protection to the member. "Children are increasingly concerned about their safety in the community and in the school," writes Knox in "Gangsta in the House." He adds that many kids will choose to join the largest and toughest gangs simply because they are perceived as the safest.

Lie #2: Membership will garner the respect of the community. "Typically, gang members will mistake fear for respect," writes Knox. He says that kids don't know the difference, but seek the recognition of being in a gang and being feared.

Lie #3: The gang will become a family. Knox says this is an illusion because

gang members don't even trust their own friends. One of the reasons they use street names or monikers is so each remains anonymous.

What can adults do to help? "Ultimately the parents' responsibility in this safety net is to reteach the child how to make good friends," writes Knox. "They must be willing to get back into their child's life and reteach him about respect, friendship, and responsibility."

Knox's book, takes readers directly into the world of gangs and begins with a riveting and uncomfortable description of a fictional drive-by shooting.

The book is written in a conversational style and reveals what gangs are all about, why boys as well as girls are drawn into them, and what parents, teachers, and the legal system can do about them.

Day Kicks Off Support For Alzheimer Families

World Alzheimer's Day, Thursday, Sept. 21 kicks off a month of Alzheimer's Association activities to build awareness of Alzheimer's disease and raise funds to support programs and services for Alzheimer families.

"Beginning this weekend and continuing through early October, nearly 200 of the Association's local chapters will hold Memory Walks across the country," says Edward Truschke, association president. Memory Walk is the only nationwide event for Alzheimer's disease.

To commemorate World Alzheimer's Day, the Alzheimer's Association has developed a brochure "You Can Make A Difference: 10 Ways to Help An Alzheimer Family," highlighting 10 simple things people can do to help an Alzheimer family.

1. **KEEP IN TOUCH.** Family members will benefit from your visits or calls.

2. **DO LITTLE THINGS — THEY MEAN A LOT.** Run an errand or surprise the caregiver with a special treat.

3. **GIVE THEM A BREAK.** Offer to stay with the Alzheimer person, so family members can have some time to themselves.

4. **BE SPECIFIC WHEN OFFERING ASSISTANCE.** Ask the family to prepare a "to do" list of hard-to-get-to

projects and figure out what you can do to help.

5. **BE ALERT.** Know how to recognize a problem and respond. Take time to learn about Alzheimer's, common behaviors and helpful care techniques.

6. **PROVIDE A CHANGE OF SCENERY.** Plan an activity that gets the whole family out of the house.

7. **LEARN TO LISTEN.** Ask family members how they're doing — be a compassionate listener.

8. **CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER.** Encourage caregivers to take care of themselves. Pass along useful information and offer to attend a support group meeting with them.

9. **REMEMBER ALL FAMILY MEMBERS.** Be attentive to all family members' needs.

10. **GET INVOLVED.** Participate in the Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk or volunteer to help at your local chapter. One in three American adults knows someone with Alzheimer's disease.

Yet relatives of someone with Alzheimer's disease often report friends do not know if their company is wanted or how to be helpful. To request the brochure or learn more about the Alzheimer's Association and the 1995 Memory Walk, call your local chapter or 1-800-272-3900.



Volunteers Make A Healthier Land In Northeast Portland: KATU-TV anchor Jeff Gianola (standing fourth from right) was one of more than two dozen volunteers from Kaiser Permanente and Channel 2 who took time on United Way's Day of Caring Aug. 29 to pull weeds and spruce up the grounds of the Neighborhood Health Clinics office in northeast Portland. The work was welcomed by the agency, which has no money for landscaping services. The Kaiser Permanente and KATU volunteers also painted porches and helped assemble and deliver packages of children's clothing, toys, soap, shampoo, and other supplies to low-income households. Neighborhood Health Clinics serves Portland's medically uninsured and underinsured, including the working poor and pregnant women.