

News

General

Mandatory abuse reporters are legally required to report child abuse and neglect

by Gary Weeks

In Oregon and throughout the United States, millions of public and private officials have been assigned the role of mandatory child abuse reporter.

But even with all these watchful, protective eyes focused on our children, we still find this precious resource slipping from our hands.

In 1997, 12 of Oregon's children died from abuse and 22 from causes related to neglect. Of this past year's 9,742 abuse victims, the largest single age group of victims was younger than 1.

The children who are most likely to be abused are often the least able to reach out for help. That's why laws require workers in certain occupations to report suspected abuse or neglect to social service or law enforcement agencies.

Although the State Office for Services to Children and Families is the agency officially charged with child protection, we have partners who help the office discern prevent and alleviate harm. Teachers, health professionals, police officers, day care providers and many others have mandatory reporting responsibility. Together, mandatory reporters accounted for 73% of the 28,008 child-abuse re-

ports we received last year. Protecting children from harm must be a priority in every Oregon community.

When parents cannot meet their children's needs and protect them from harm, society has a responsibility to intervene to protect the health and welfare of the children.

It can be difficult to pick up the phone and report suspicions of neglect or abuse. Such a call does not necessarily result in immediate removal of children from their parents, but begins a process of assessment into their safety and security.

Oregon laws contain confidentiality and liability protections for those who make reports in good faith. Your call could be the beginning of a helping process for children and families.

In addition to reporting suspected abuse of children, our ethical responsibility extends to reporting suspected abuse of people who are elderly or dependent; of people with mental illness or developmental disabilities who receive services from a community program or facility; and of residents of nursing homes and other health care facilities.

Various laws covering these populations offer differing defini-

tions of abuse. But there is a lot of common ground. Certainly, any evidence of physical injury, neglect, sexual or emotional abuse, or financial exploitation should be reported.

Ultimately, reporting suspected abuse or neglect is a societal responsibility. It is the right thing to do.

The following are contacts for more information about recognizing and reporting abuse:

***Suspected child abuse:** Local offices of the State Office for Services to Children and Families;

***Suspected abuse of the elderly or those in nursing homes or other facilities:** Anna Mallard, Senior and Disabled Services Division, 503-945-5979, e-mail anna.mallard@state.or.us;

***Suspected abuse of people with mental illness or developmental disabilities:** Eva Kutas, Mental Health and Developmental Disability Services Division, 503-945-9491, e-mail eva.kutas@state.or.us;

***All of the above:** Governor's Advocacy Office, 1-800-442-5238;

***You also will find useful information at the Safe House link on the DHR web site (www.hr.state.or.us).**

October 4 Poetry Reading and Book Signing by New York City Poet Susan Wheeler

In her first Portland appearance, New York City poet Susan Wheeler will read from her work Sunday, October 4, at 7:30 pm at Powell's Bookstore, 3723 SE Hawthorn, Portland. The reading is free and open to the public. For further information, the public may call Powell's Bookstore at 800-878-4323.

Her first collection, *Bag 'o' Diamonds* (University of Georgia Press, 1993), received the Poetry Society of America's first book award and was short listed for the Los Angeles Times book award in poetry.

Her second, *Smokes* (Four Way Books, 1998), was selected for the Four Way Books Award by former poet laureate Robert Hass, who wrote, in the book's afterword, that Wheeler's poetry "sets the two conditions of poetry at the beginning and the end of the century next to one another with a kind of pure glee..."

It's as if she took an aspect of postmodernism back through Auden to its ancestral roots in Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear and then leapt forward again to make new inventions of it in the disoriented present." He cites the opening poem's homage to Robert Frost:

The girls are drifting in their ponytails and their pig iron boat. So much for Sunday.

The dodo birds are making a



racket to beat the band. You should have come to.

Her poems have appeared in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review* and *Chain*, and in six editions of *The Best American Poetry* (Scribner's)-including this year's volume, edited by John Hollander, as

well as the tenth anniversary *The Best of the Best American Poetry*, edited by Harold Bloom and also published in 1998. She is on the graduate faculty of the creative writing program at The New School for Social Research in New York City, and has given readings throughout the U.S., Canada, and Europe.

"We Are Tired Of Being Targets!"

The facts are alarming. Our community is papered with tobacco ads aimed at first graders. Candy aisles are littered with the Psychedelic Camel. The Marlboro Man peers rudely down on kindergartners in the school bus. Isn't anybody doing anything?

Thanks to students from four Multnomah County High Schools, our community will become aware of the damaging effects of tobacco advertising and tobacco sales to minors on our youth.

The students from Corbett, Centennial, Marshall and Roosevelt are joining with Rainbow Gas in St. John's to share the results of their anti-tobacco programs with press and community members on Saturday, September 19th at 1:00 pm. The young people will design and deliver their own press conference and will be presenting at Rainbow Gas Station. Our students found from their surveys that Rain-

bow (a designated historical landmark and the first gas station in the St. John's area) never sells tobacco products to minors, and does not accept tobacco advertising.

The students have created a set and written a script to aid them in presenting facts gathered during their retailer visits. They will release the percentage of retailer in their communities willing to sell tobacco to minors as well as the amount and placement of tobacco advertising. These dedicated and energetic high schoolers have invited Eric Vidstrand, aka *The Barfman* and his *Barfboro* van (a van painted to spoof the Marlboro van) to join them, as well as community leaders, local celebrities, parents, teachers, and members of the press.

Who: Students from Corbett, Centennial, Marshall, and Roosevelt High Schools are joining with the owners of Rainbow Gas

What: A Press Conference

designed to release data gathered during the Operation Storefront and Reward and Reminder tobacco prevention programs

When: Saturday, September 19, 1:00 pm

Where: Rainbow Gas Station, 8038 Fessenden (in the St. John's neighborhood)

Why: To protest the amount, placement, and prevalence of tobacco advertising

To celebrate a retailer behaving responsibly with youth in mind

To educate our community about how tobacco ads affect our kids

To save as many kids as possible from tobacco addiction

Visuals: A set designed to show what tobacco advertising looks like from a child's point of view; high school students presenting the results in front of their set in a scripted form; the *Barfboro* van painted in red and white to spoof the Marlboro van.

Meyer Memorial Trust Grants Funds To Local Nonprofit Groups

The Meyer Memorial Trust has announced 43 grant awards totaling \$3,738,800 to nonprofit groups in Oregon and Clark County, Washington during August and September 1998.

The grants included 20 awards in the Trust's Small Grants program, designed to provide assistance to small projects that are of special importance to applicants, which are normally smaller organizations.

Board Chair Debbie Craig announced that the new grants brought the total funds

awarded to \$12.5 million in the Trust's current fiscal year, which began April 1.

Since it began operating in 1982, the Meyer Trust has provided more than \$209 million to tax-exempt groups, mostly within the state of Oregon. Small Grants are approved quarterly, while General Purpose awards are made each month.

General purpose grants ranged from \$10,000 to the Alano Club of Portland to replace the heating and cooling system in the historic building that houses this sub-

stance abuse recovery program to \$1,000,000 to help expand the I Have a Dream program to Forest Grove, providing the students with long-term academic, cultural, and social support so they will graduate from high school and continue with higher education or job training. Last year the Meyer Trust granted more than \$23 million, and expects to award a similar amount this year, Craig said. The Meyer Memorial Trust is not connected with Fred Meyer, Inc., the retail enterprise.

perspectives

Life After Internet: The Lead Pencil Society II

by Prof. McKinley Burt

Last week, I reported the findings of the "HomeNet" group of cyberspace industry giants: Intel, Hewlett Packard, Apple, etc. Their two-year study revealed that the "net" (world wide web) was creating isolation, loneliness and depression in a number of people.

But I also made note of a counter movement whose advice to "get-a-life" is incorporated in the title of a book I cited, "Minutes of the Lead Pencil Club," ed., Bill Henderson. Pushcart Press, 1996. Plaintive little protests are surfacing in many places, "enough already of e-mail, e-prints, e-journals and whatever-away-with-that ubiquitous vowel!"

An interesting cry from the wilderness comes from Evelyn Theiss, a writer for the Newhouse News Service. How long has it been since you've had the following experience and thoroughly enjoyed it?

"There in the mound of glossy catalogs and garish fliers, a glimpse of script on an envelope tells you that there is a letter from a friend." Are things as bad as our columnist suggests? "A dying art vanquished first by the telephone, finished off by electronic mail." There's that word!

We further have it that U.S. Postal

Records for the period between 1987 and 1996 shows a slight decrease in the number of personal letters written from 2.7% of the mail received by a household to 1.7% of the mail received (and that was 'before' the e-mail explosion). If a giant solar flare interrupts all electronics, will we go back to pictographs on the walls of caves?

Again the "plaintive" cries for a return to intimacy and sociability. But that day does not seem to be on the horizon, for it appears that we have a machine which will be powered by its own momentum until de-railed.

Where and when did this information glut begin? We shudder that Marshall McLuhan may have been right again, "The Medium is the Message."

While many who are 'knowledgeable' about the system will tell you that it all began in 1989 when Tim Berners-Lee, a physicist proposed a global 'hypertext' system that he named "World Wide Web," his goal was to create universally accessible information space for 'all the world's citizens.' But initially it was a design to create, search, and retrieve documents available to a small group of scientists.

At the end of World War II, DR. Vannevar Bush, an electrical engineer and

vice president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) looked around at the Wartime Office of Scientific Research and Development where he supervised 6000 scientists, who had been applying the latest technology to modern warfare.

This unique experience gave Dr. Bush a seminal insight into the possibility for a 'world-wide' information conglomerate. "Instruments are at hand which, if developed properly, will give man access to and command over the inherited knowledge of the ages" (Atlantic Monthly, summer 1945).

Here, over fifty years ago, Dr. Bush was griping about the problem of information overload and the need of a process that gives people control over all that information.

And, unbelievably, that early on he foresaw the need to create information "trails" that "linked" related texts and illustrations. The trails themselves could be stored and used for future reference. Clearly the concept of "hypertext" was born in the summer of 1945.

Next week, I will return us to the minutes of the "Lead Pencil" people. We would not wish to be engulfed and swept away by a giant 'tsunami' wave of information before we have the strength to endure.

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-Minister Louis Farrakhan

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