

Family Living

Raising A Healthy Child

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Eleven million children in America are not covered by health insurance. One in five uninsured children are Black -- that's about 2.2 million children, and 19.1% of all Black children had no health insurance in 1996. If your child is not covered by health insurance or Medicaid, or if you know such a child, I have important information for you.

Thanks to the new state Children's Health Insurance Program, children have the opportunity to receive the medical coverage that will ensure their healthy development and their ability to reach their full potential.

However, it's important that you know that children will not receive health coverage through this new program automatically. Parents must apply for it. A lot of parents don't know about this yet, and they don't know where to go to apply or get information. It's going to take action by concerned neighbors, community leaders, and child advocates to make sure children and families get the help they need. Here's what you need to know about how to proceed.

The CHIP program is designed to help children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid but too low to afford family coverage. It is the most significant funding increase for children's health since Medicaid was enacted

by Congress in 1965. The program provides \$4 billion a year in grants for states to cover this coverage.

In most states, a working family of four earning up to \$32,900 a year would qualify. In most states, children will receive hospital care, regular check-ups, immunizations, eyeglasses, doctor visits, and prescription drug coverage.

Each state program has its own name, eligibility requirements, and range of benefits, and you'll need to call your state to find

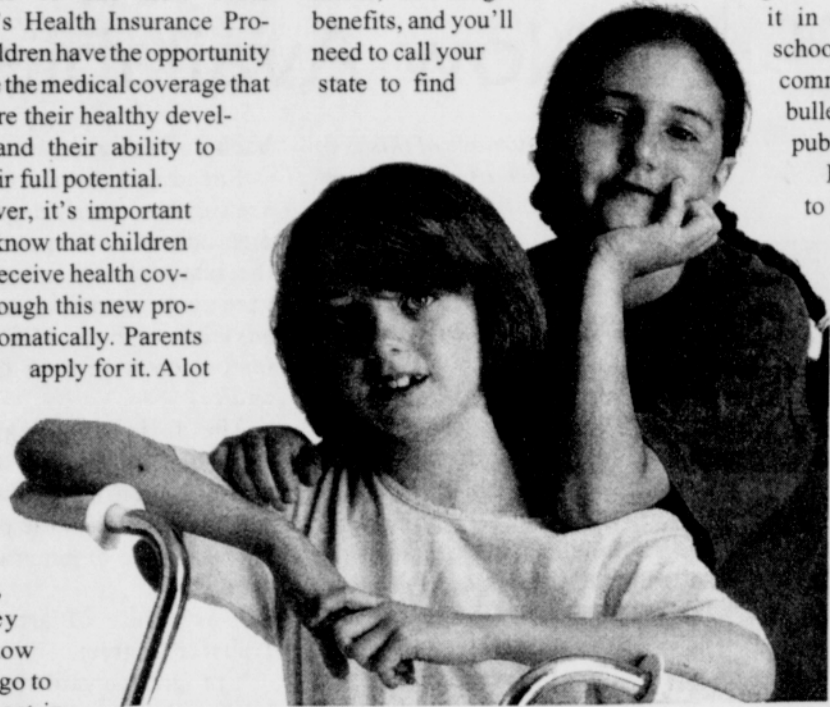
out how to apply. If you have a computer or can use one at your local library, you can visit the Children's Defense Fund's Web site at www.childrensdefense.org and you'll be able to get the phone number to call in your state as well as details about the benefits and costs of your state's program and what you need to do to apply, as well as a flyer on your state's CHIP program. If you don't have access to a com-

puter, you can call us toll-free at 1-800-CDF-1200 and press option 2. Leave a message including your name, organization, address, phone and fax numbers, and the state you need to know about, and we will mail or fax you the information. Please help to spread the word about this free or low-cost health insurance for children. Tell your friends and neighbors about the Children's Health Insurance Program. You could post flyers about it in child care centers and schools, and insert flyers in your community group's or church's bulletins, newsletters, and other publications.

Families should not have to worry about whether they can afford to keep their children's immunizations up to date, whether they can afford check-ups and prescriptions, or whether a child's ear infection or vision problems are "bad enough" to get attended to.

Unfortunately, not all children who need it will be covered by this program, but we're going to keep working with lawmakers and policy makers in Washington and around the country until

every one of the 11 million uninsured children in America can have access to the care they need. Meanwhile, please make sure to apply as soon as possible if your family needs this insurance, and let others know about it too. Together we can try to make sure that every child in this rich country gets the medical care and Healthy Start in life that he or she needs and deserves.



Safe Passages: A Foster Mom's Story

By KITTIE SOUTHERN

A moment comes in a person's life that if recognized, changes that life forever. My husband Lloyd and I had such a moment.

Eleven years ago our then teen-age daughter brought home a friend. As we became acquainted with this young girl, we learned of a tragic home life filled with abuse and neglect. We opened our hearts and home to her. This was the beginning of our foster parenting journey.

For more than a decade our home has been a safe haven for 142 of Oregon's children and teen-agers. We have provided care to mostly teen-age girls because that is what we are used to. We have two adult daughters of our own. Teen-agers are also some of the more challenging foster care placements to make. These kids carry a lot more emotional baggage and have more issues to work through.

Parenting our children, however, didn't automatically prepare us for the needs of some of the children placed in our home. While foster parents are willing

to give of themselves and are compassionate and understanding people, the children they care for have hurts that a hug or kind word can't heal.

I have specialized training in working with children exposed to cults, drug and alcohol abuse, and sex abuse. Other foster parents have expertise in caring for children with special medical needs, infants or sibling groups.

When I look back at the past years and the children who have come into our lives, I recall successes and failures. At one point in my life, I realized that I could not save every child who came to live with us. There were times when a placement didn't work out.

There was a recent placement that is not only working well but will work out for the long run. We are adopting a child who came to us as a foster care placement about 18 months ago.

Foster parenting takes a lot of patience, focus and energy. If you wait for a thank you, it may not come. What keeps me going year after year are the milestones - watching a child make the honor roll for the first time, a senior graduating from high school and

a freshman going off to college.

I don't possess any magic that can help turn around these young lives assigned to me nor do I have a lot of profound advice for would-be foster parents. I speak only from my experience. I have seen first hand how a safe and healthy home nurtures the mind, body and spirit of a child. Children of all ages and in all stages of life deserve a good home and someone to care for them.

There are more than 6,000 Oregon children in the foster care system and about 3,400 certified foster care parents. Oregon needs more. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a foster care parent, I would suggest a respite care placement. For example, open your home to a child or a sibling group for a weekend. The experience may be the beginning of your own journey as a foster care parent. Either way, the experience will enrich your own life and that of a child.

For more information about becoming a foster care parent, call 1.800.331.0503. Kittie Southern of Clackamas County is one of the founders of the Oregon Foster Parent Association.

Check out our The Portland Observer Web-site!
<http://PortlandObserver.net>

Oregon HEAT The Living Room Project

Grant will expand fund raising program for low income bill payment assistance

Portland General Electric (PGE) presented a \$50,000 grant today to Oregon HEAT, an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds to help families in need pay their bill during the cold winter months. Oregon HEAT will use the grant to implement a comprehensive two-year fund raising campaign.

This winter marks the seventh year PGE will work with Oregon HEAT to meet the needs of families in crisis due to unemployment, accidents, sickness and other unforeseen circumstances. The grant is in addition to the annual support PGE gives the Oregon HEAT program, which includes an annual cash contribution of \$43,000 plus a significant amount of in-kind services, such as office space and fund raising assistance through bill inserts and public relations support.

"When PGE merged with Enron, we made a commitment to the people of Oregon to maintain our local presence in the community and continue our support of families in need," says Al Alex Anderson, PGE senior vice president. "By investing in Oregon HEAT's long-term stability, we're able to help thousands of Oregonians stay warm for many winters to come."

PGE is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Enron Corp., one of the world's leading integrated electricity and natural gas companies. PGE is the single largest distributor of Oregon's electrical energy needs in one of the fastest growing economies in the nation. As a fully integrated utility, PGE serves nearly 700,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in northwest Oregon.

By MEG ROWE

As an artist, educator and activist, I find myself continually questioning and investigating: materials and processes; historical references; the issues of concern in my community. In the case of this project I asked, what happens if I invite youth who are affected by homelessness to work with a concept: Pioneer Square as the "city's living room" and provide them with some raw materials: discarded objects from the streets, some tools and some technical information? The outcome exceeded all my expectations. These young people worked with dedication and persistence. They not only demonstrated an inventive sense of design; but also an ability to solve problems creatively; to

collaborate with each other and have a good time. Most significantly, they revealed a sophisticated understanding of the potential this project has to reach the public with message of affirmation for their lives, their needs, their dreams.

This project would not have been possible without the sponsorship of Outside In, Socio-medical Care Center. Their staff and volunteers opened countless doors for me to make connections with the young people involved in this project. I learned volumes from them. The other teachers in this endeavor are the youth themselves. I thank all of you who shared a part of your lives with me; you taught me something about courage and persistence and dreaming.

Interfaith Children's Sabbath Celebration

On October 18 a Portland Interfaith coalition will join thousands of congregations in Oregon and across America in celebrating the seventh annual National Observance of Children's Sabbath. Designed to reaffirm the commitment of people of faith to our children and to focus national attention on children, this year's local event will focus on strengthening assets in the lives of young people.

The Portland area Interfaith Celebration will take place October 18, 3:00 pm, at Woodlawn United Methodist Church (1425 NE Dekum St.). The worship service will feature reflections by young people from our community, children's music and information about opportunities available for congregations and individuals. There will be refreshments following the worship service.



Just think: Your son is bright, healthy and headed for college one day. You love the direction your

career has taken. You're doing a lot of the things you planned and even a few you didn't. Living life to the fullest is easy when you have family behind you. American Family Insurance. Call and talk to one of our helpful, friendly agents. You'll find out why we're consistently rated A+ (Superior) by A.M. Best, the insurance rating authority. Then, go on. Dream. Plan. What you do next is up to you and we'll be here to help you.

You have family behind you.

All Your Protection Under One Roof.



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