

Family Living

Cost Of Raising A Child Continue To Rise

The cost of raising a child continues to rise and is highest for families living in cities in the western United States, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In its annual report, "Expenditures on Children by Families," the USDA estimates a middle income (\$35,900 to \$60,400 a year before taxes), two-parent family in the urban West will spend \$169,440 to raise a child born in 1998 to age 18.

Childraising costs in the urban West are higher than the rest of the country primarily because housing is more expensive, according to Alice Mills Morrow, Oregon State University Extension family resources specialist.

Housing is the largest expense across all income groups and accounts for 36 to 38 percent of child-rearing expenses. Food is the second largest average expense, accounting for 15 to 20 percent.

The cost of food for a child rises steadily as the child grows older, almost doubling by the teenage years, according to the report. A middle income family in the urban west spends an estimated \$1,090 per year on food for a child from birth to age two. The food budget will reach an estimated \$2,110 per year for the same child when she or he is between ages 15-17.

Families with an income below \$35,900 will spend a higher percentage of their income for food expenses, 19.5 percent, compared to families with an income above \$60,400, whose food costs will account for 15 percent.

Unlike food expenses, the cost of child care is highest during the first five years of life. Child care is the only expense that goes down as a child grows older.

Because single-parent households account for an increasing percentage of families with children, the USDA prepared separate estimates for these households.

The estimates show that a single parent family with an income less than

\$36,000 before taxes will spend \$109,350 to raise a child born in 1998 to age 18. The western two-parent counterpart will spend \$127,680. Although the actual expenditure is less for single-parent families, it represents a larger percentage of income.

"Single-parent families have lower average incomes and spend a larger percentage of their income on children," Morrow said.

Because the USDA estimates are based on averages, they are not useful in predicting what a particular family will spend. However, they do illustrate useful trends. For instance, the overall cost of raising a child increases as a child gets older, a signal for parents to continually find ways to add to their income.

"That's probably not good news for parents of pre-school children who think financial pressures will be less when day care is no longer required," Morrow said. "Unfortunately, the savings in child care as youngsters grow older is more than offset by increases in other expense categories."

The USDA estimates only apply to costs from birth through age 18. They do not include the cost of saving for college. While saving for college is encouraged, Morrow says people need to take care of immediate concerns first and get their current situation under control.

The USDA estimates are put to a variety of uses. Divorce attorneys and mediators employ them to provide a reality check for parents who think child support guidelines are unrealistic.

The estimates are also useful in estate planning to evaluate financial needs in case of a parent's death. And teachers use the estimates to help students understand the financial changes that accompany parenthood. In addition, the estimates are useful in developing state child support guidelines and foster care payments.

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Das Phat Has Two New Members



The new members are Michelle Washington and Brent Archie. The ministry has initiated Project PHAT '99. Project PHAT '99' is a campaign to raise money for PHAT Community/Training Center. This includes the building, staff, and operational costs. The project also consists of establishing a resource base for volunteers who are interested in working with inner-city youth by donating their time and/or services.

• Past engagements include: 88 Keys, The Scream '98 w/IDOL Kings, Generation Unleashed '00, university of Oregon State University's Black History Month Program, Monroe Program, Job Corps, Destiny Conference '99 (Spokane, WA), and many more.
• Das PHAT will be bringing National Recording Artists GRITS (as seen on Teen Summit and BET's Rap City) to Portland. They will be in concert on August 28th; GRITS -along with Das PHAT and C.A.V.E. (Seattle, WA) -will be in concert here in Portland. Please keep watch for further notice of this event.

estimates of raising a child, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Cost of Raising a Child, OSU Extension, 161 Milam Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331-5106. The USDA report is also available on the World Wide Web at www.usda.gov/cnpp.

Oregon WIC Turns 25 and Launches A New Image

This May, Oregon's Women, Infants and Children's Nutrition Program (WIC) celebrates its 25th birthday and launches a new look.

A new WIC logo was unveiled as part of the birthday observance at the Portland State Office Building on May 27. An important aspect of WIC's new look is a strong emphasis on the public health aspect of the program. "WIC is an enormously successful public health program," says Elinor Hall, Administrator of the Health Division. "It is an important contribu-



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program

"healthy kids, strong parents"

Mike Gilbert, Vice President of the Oregon Pediatric Society. "Children

tort to good health for pregnant women and their children. Yet we have a concern that because WIC is sometimes seen as a welfare program, eligible families do not participate. Meanwhile, the research is very clear that every dollar spent on WIC services for prenatal women

saves at least three dollars in hospital costs for newborns."

"WIC helps ensure that kids get a healthy start," says Dr.

Children

who benefit from this program not only eat healthier diets, they have higher immunization rates. WIC improves cognitive development, which means kids enter school better equipped to learn."

The WIC program in Oregon serves 94,000 pregnant women and young children every month. "One of the most important things WIC does, in addition to making sure clients get healthy food, is to provide nutrition and health education which can last a lifetime," said Hall.

For more information about WIC services or to get in touch with a local contact person, call Kristin Sasseen at the Health Division. 503-731-3351.

New Project Targets Teen Drug Use

A four-year project aimed at learning more about the causes and development of teen-age substance use and related habits was launched recently by the Multnomah County Health Department/Oregon Health Division and Oregon Research Institute.

The Adolescents, Families, & Neighborhoods Project, financed by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, will involve 360 families in 60 Portland neighborhoods.

The project is designed to understand the circumstances in which adolescents develop substance use habits and related behavior problems. Using surveys, neighborhood data, school and court records, and census information, project scientists hope to learn how families, peers, schools, and neighborhoods influence pre-adolescent and adolescent substance use and behavior problems.

"Most people recognize that children and adolescents are affected by their surroundings, but scientists still don't have a clear picture of how all of these influences fit together to protect against or increase risk of substance use or abuse," says project Principal

Investigator Susan Duncan, an Oregon Research Institute scientist.

Duncan believes that as pre-adolescents grow into adolescents, family influences may diminish and friends become more important. As a result, one way to help youths avoid drugs and other problems may be to focus on family support and supervision in the early years and on cultivating good friendships and constructive activities later on.

It is unclear, however, how broader social contexts, such as neighborhoods, influence families, teenagers, and peers.

"Right now, we can only speculate on how multiple influences work to encourage or discourage substance use in adolescence," Duncan says. "This project, with its focus on data collection from many sources, including neighborhoods, will give us a much better idea of what's going on. Our goal is to use this knowledge to create drug use prevention and treatment programs that truly help kids and their families."

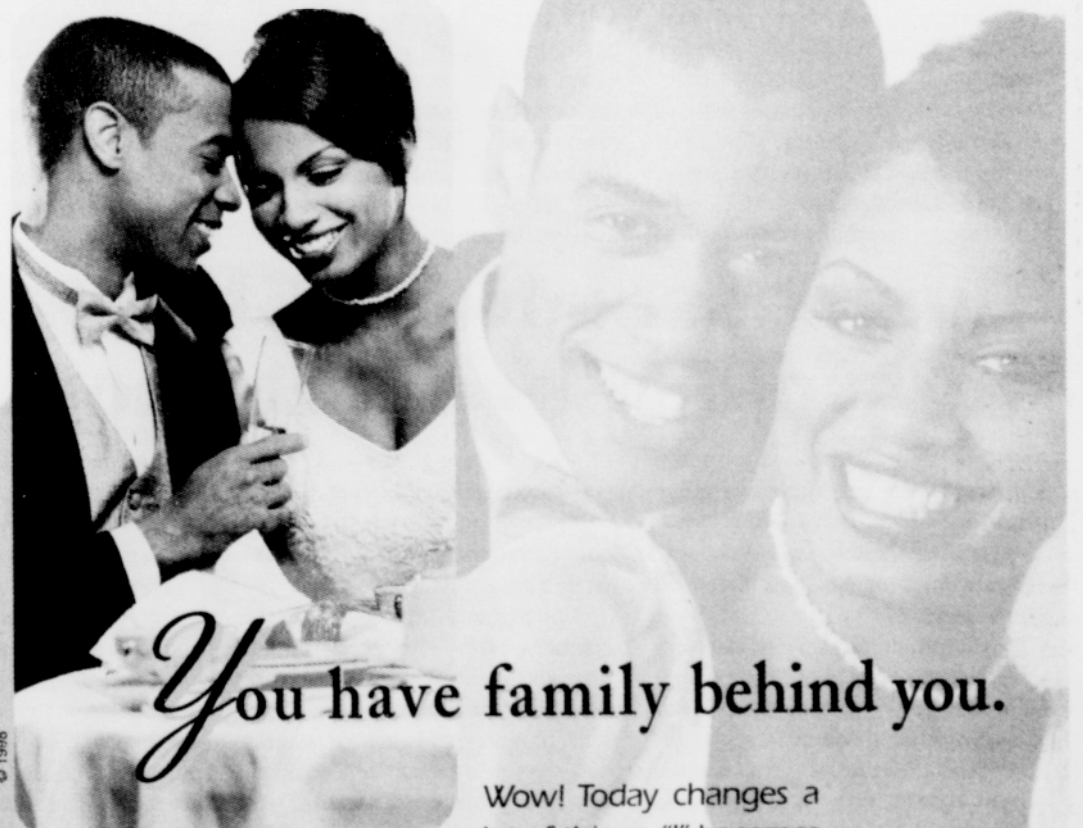
The project is one of a few of its kind to focus on African-American as

well as Caucasian youth. Since most substance use study has been done primarily with Caucasian youth, it's unclear whether drug prevention and treatment programs based on this research is relevant for African-American teens. The current project aims to study similarities and differences among African-Americans and Caucasians, and to generate ideas for effective programs for both ethnic groups.

Families, chosen at random from the selected neighborhoods, will be contacted by telephone. Those meeting eligibility requirements are asked to participate by completing surveys in their homes once a year for the next four years. The project is primarily directed at 9-11-, and 13-year-olds, and their parents and brothers and sisters.

Families interested in finding out more about the project may contact the project office at (503) 731-3273. Participating families are paid for their time.

In addition to the youth and parent questionnaires, short Neighborhood Representative Surveys are being sent annually to nearly 3,000 Portland businesses and organizations.



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