

Family Living

R E P O R T

Outlook Good for U.S. Kids Vaccinations, School Enrollment Up; Smoking, Violence Down

By LAURA MECKLER
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WASHINGTON - Statistically, things are looking up for American kids.

Vaccinations and preschool enrollment are up. Teen smoking, child-birth and youth violence are down, according to a government report.

"The trend is in the right direction. We're sailing with the wind," said Kristen Moore, president of Child Trends, a research group.

Still, Moore notes that there's been no progress in reducing teen alcohol consumption or increasing health insurance coverage, and even the areas that have seen improvement are still disturbing. "We're not where we should be," she said.

The annual report, released Thursday, is designed to be a broad assessment of the state of the nation's children, a collection of statistics from across the federal government. Backers hope it will someday reach the prominence of the annual economic report to the president.

"I would contend that our children are as important to the future of

the country as the economy," said Dr. Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. "The stock market will never depend on it, but I hope the report will annually at least focus attention on the status and condition of our children."

Among the findings:
-Most children and teens had diets that needed improvement. For instance, in 1996, 24 percent of children ages 2 to 5 had a good diet and 8 percent had a poor diet. The rest needed improvement to meet federal recommendations. Those numbers generally got worse for older kids.

-The number of 10th and 12th graders smoking dropped in 1998 after gradually increasing since 1992. But 22 percent of high school seniors and 16 percent of sophomores still smoked.

-The birth rate for girls ages 15 to 17 fell from its peak of 38.7 live births per 1,000 teens in 1991 to 32.1 percent in 1997.

-Forty-eight percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in preschool in 1997, up from 45 percent a year earlier, partly due to welfare reform pushing mothers

into the workforce. The most dramatic rise was among black children, with the percentage rising from 45 percent to 55 percent.

-The number of poor kids to get all their vaccines edged up in 1997 to 71 percent, up from 69 percent in 1996.

Lately, much of the attention on teens has dealt with violence, as the nation struggles to understand school shootings in Colorado, Georgia and elsewhere.

But youth violence has actually been dropping since it peaked in 1993.

"The public in general doesn't have a very accurate view of violent crime," said Margaret A. Zahn, a criminologist at North Carolina State University.

In 1997, there were 31 serious violent juvenile crimes committed for every 1,000 children ages 12 to 17. That's down from 52 per 1,000 in 1993 and is the lowest rate since 1986, according to the Justice Department. Still, in 1997 there were 706,000 violent crimes involving one or more of these teens.

There are also fewer teen victims of crime. There were 27 victims for every 1,000 people ages 12 to 17 in 1997. That's down from 44 in 1,000 in 1993, Justice said.

Links Scholarship Winner



Miss Yasmin Ravard

Portland Chapter Links, Incorporated, awards a performing or visual arts scholarship to a graduating African American high school seniors who has demonstrated artistic potential in high school achievement and leadership ability. This year's scholarship has been awarded to Miss Yasmin Ravard, graduating senior from St. Mary's Academy. Ms. Ravard is a talented singer and actress, directing and playing lead roles in several school plays. She served as an Outdoor School Counselor, and demonstrated high academic achievement with a 3.8 GPA. She will use the scholarship to continue her education as

a theater major at the University of Oregon.

The Links Performing/Visual Arts Scholarship is awarded yearly and is intended to assist students in their educational endeavors and to encourage young men and women to prepare for the future. Scholarship money may be used at any accredited institution or approved program of continued learning in the performing arts or visual arts. Earlier this year, Portland Chapter of Links, Incorporated awarded five academic scholarships to local high school seniors at the Annual Ebony Fashion Fair.

If you have any questions, contact: Pat Walker 638-8901

Multnomah Women's Club

On June 5, 1999 the Multnomah Women's Club presented a total of \$7,000.00 to two local students. Jonathan J. Johnson graduated from Barlow High School in 1998 and attended his freshman year at Highline Community College near Seattle, Washington. He will attend Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon to begin his sophomore year. After completing his sophomore year at Lane, he will complete his degree in Business Administration at University of Oregon.

During Jonathan's tenure at Barlow High School, he was a member of the Student Principal Advisory Board. Students were chosen by Principal Wally Shuerler to assist him in solving problems that faced the student body and the surrounding community. Jonathan was a coordinator and participant in the first annual fashion show at Barlow. Participants and coordinators were both chosen specifically through behavior and performance in the classroom. During his senior year at Barlow High School, Jonathan was the Cultural Awareness Club Treasurer.

He was actively involved in his

community as a participant in the Fellowship of Christian Athlete Club, Peer Helper Program; a program that helps students work through personal problems, and also as a teen leader in Youth Group at East Hill Church.

Jonathan, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Levan Johnson Jr., received \$3,000.00 from the Multnomah Women's Club. He is also the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Levan Johnson, Sr., and Mrs. Thelma Ray of Jacksonville, Florida.

Douglas Jon Gaither, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Gaither and a 1999 graduate of Wilson High School, received a \$4,000.00 scholarship from the Multnomah Women's Club. Douglas was involved in the Multi-Cultural Club at Wilson High School. He played varsity basketball and was a teacher-aid in the physically challenged class where he learned much about helping others.

One of Douglas's most memorable experiences happened while he was a seventh grade student at Trinity Lutheran School. He was chosen from among 8,000 students nationwide who entered a letter writing contest to members of the Congress in Respect Teen "Speak for Yourself" contest. His letter was

written to U.S. Rep. Ron Wyden. In the letter he stressed improving the quality of education. Douglas was one of 51 students who represented the 51 states at the Teen Youth Forum which was held in Washington, D.C. "I learned about our government," he said. "I also got to meet and talk with the senators and representatives." He was twelve years old at the time.

Douglas is a member of Berean Baptist Church and has volunteered in Vacation Bible School every year.

He has been accepted to attend the University of Oregon, majoring in Journalism. He has also received a Diversity Scholarship from the University of Oregon where he will attend in the fall. Douglas Jon Gaither is also the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Bland F. Gaither and Mrs. Edith Mickey of McMinnville, Oregon.

Multnomah Women's Club, a member of the National Association of Colored Women Club, was organized in April 1941 for the purpose of working for the moral, economic, and religious welfare of women and children. Mrs. Lillian Whitlow is the president of Multnomah Women's Club.

Summer And The "Fire" Season Have Arrived!

Wildfire and Hillside Fires... A Real Threat

Did you know? It takes an average of 10 minutes for a home in an urban/wildland interface fire to burn to the foundation.

Did you know? The seventh most costly catastrophe in the United States was the Oakland Hills wildfire of 1991. Insured losses exceed 1.7 billion dollars.

"Many in the urban area do not view wildfire as a threat. The fire in Oakland Hills California proved to all that this is not the case. Dry, hot summer days provide near perfect conditions for the spread of wildfires and hillside fires," says Krista K. Fischer, regional coordinator for the Western Insurance Information Service (WIIIS), "particularly following a very wet, lush growing season for area plants, underbrush and grasses. Even though fire is the number one peril covered under homeowners insurance, nothing can make up for a lost life or the emotional stress and inconvenience of suffering a major property loss. There are steps homeowners can take to reduce the risk to property and lives before a fire strikes, along with certain insurance preparations that will help reduce the stress involved when suffering a fire loss."

Since the 1970s, growing populations in Oregon, Idaho and Montana have expanded further into traditional resource lands such as forests and rangelands. The "interface" that has been created between urban and suburban area and these resource lands has created increased and significant threats to life and property from wildfires. This has also pressured existing fire protection systems beyond design or capability.

"The insurance, forestry and fire service communities are concerned about major fires this summer," says Fischer. "We would like to educate homeowners on what they can do now so we can avoid some of the catastrophic losses which have occurred in the past such as the Bend skeleton and Sundance fires, and numerous fires throughout Idaho and Montana as well."

"We have areas in all three states that are prime for hillside fires," she says. "In Portland the hills abound even in the suburbs, similar geographic conditions can be found in Boise and other cities in the Pacific Northwest. An 'Oakland Hills-type' fire could happen up here as easily as it did in California."

It's now a common, summertime occurrence that hundreds of homes in Oregon, Idaho and Montana are threatened or destroyed by wild fire. This costs million of dollars annually to residents of these three states. While

homeowners' insurance covers fire losses, it can't replace a life or ease the emotional trauma of losing irreplaceable keepsakes, heirlooms or your home.

Homeowners and renters, according to Fischer, should check their insurance coverages with their agent or company representative to make certain limits are adequate in the event of a loss. Ask questions, such as: 'Is the home insured to value? Is the coverage for guaranteed replacement cost? What about my personal property? What coverage is provided for shrubs and trees? Other structures? Valuable papers, jewelry, ect.? What should I do in the event of a loss? How do I file a claim.

Homeowners should take an inventory of their personal property, or update their current inventory. The inventory should be stored, along with photographs, in a safe place away from the home such as safety deposit box.

Your insurance companies, through WIIIS, offer the following:

- Use your yard as a "defensible space." You can accomplish this by removing all dry grass, brush and dead leaves at least 30 feet from your home. Replace highly flammable plants with landscaping plants that are fire retardant.

- Space trees and shrubs at least 10 feet apart. Reduce the number of trees in heavily wooded areas. Contact your local utility company if you notice tree branches encroaching on power lines on your property or in your neighborhood. For trees taller than 18 feet, prune lower branches within 6 feet of the ground to keep ground fires from spreading into treetops.

- Stack firewood and scrap wood piles (uphill if possible) at least 30 feet from any structure and clear away flammable vegetation within 10 feet of any woodpile.

- Locate butane/propane tanks at least 30 feet from any structure and surround them with 10 feet of clearance.
- Defensible space must be regularly maintained to be effective. This includes a well-pruned and watered landscape.

Taking care of the inside of your home is extremely important in saving lives. Test smoke detectors monthly. Replace batteries at least once a year. Keep fire extinguishers in strategic and accessible locations. Make certain all extinguishers are properly charged and all family members know how to use them. Consider the installation of a residential sprinkler system. Home sprinkler systems provide an immediate response to a fire and are one of the most

effective and reliable ways to protect your home and life against loss. To further protect your home from the heat of an external fire, install protective shutters and fire retardant drapes.

Exterior Fire Proofing... Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home. When building a new home or re-roofing and existing home consider the use of fire resistant materials. Be sure to clear pine needles, leaves, or other debris from your roof, gutters and ducts.

Remove any branches hanging over your roof, as well as tree branches within ten feet of your chimney. Cover your chimney outlet and stovepipe with a non-flammable screen of one half inch or smaller mesh.

Enclose the underside of balconies, above ground decks and open foundations with fire resistant materials.


Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face areas of vegetation. Even from a distance of 80 feet away, the heat from a wildfire is enough to burn furnishings inside your house. Install dual-pane or triple-pane windows to reduce the potential of breaking in a fire.

Make it easy for the fire fighters to reach you... Know at least two exit routes from your neighborhood in case of an emergency evacuation. Make sure any road leading to your house allows two-way traffic, is not too steep, and does not have curves too sharp to accommodate large emergency vehicles.

Driveways and bridges must be able to support heavy emergency vehicles, including bulldozers carried on large trucks. Make sure dead-end roads and long driveways have turnaround areas that are wide enough for emergency vehicles.

Your street name and address should be printed in numbers and letters that are at least four (4) inches tall and should be on a contrasting color background. They should be visible from all directions of travel for at least 150 feet. Be sure your street name and number are not duplicated elsewhere in your fire district. If your home is set back from the street or road, post your address at the entrance of your driveway.

Emergency plans a must... Plan an escape route from your home and neighborhood with your family. Designate an emergency meeting place for family members using alternative escape routes and establish a contact point to communicate with concerned relatives. Practice emergency exit drills on a regular basis.



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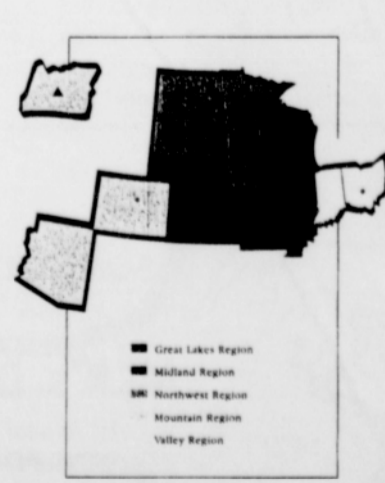
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