



Health/Education

Local Team Keeps Families Child Abuse Free

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, but a local team of health care and public safety officials are helping keep children safe every month of the year.

In 1998, Dr. Leila Keltner, medical director of the CARES NW child abuse assessment center, conceptualized an educational program to teach baby-sitting aged children in engaging, interactive ways about shaken baby syndrome.

From that initial idea, Kids Preventing Child Abuse was created in partnership with Legacy Health System, Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland Public Schools, Kaiser Permanente and the Portland Police Bureau.

"At that time, nearly one third of the children seen at CARES NW were abused by other children," Keltner said.



Students from the Portland area listen to a presentation on the topics of shaken baby syndrome, domestic violence and the effects of drugs and alcohol on babies.

"The staff felt that educating preteens and teens about the consequences of their conduct with younger children would

save lives." The CARES NW staff then proposed to make free, multi-dimensional, interactive presentations to hundreds of children per year on the topics of shaken baby syndrome, domestic violence and the effects of drugs and alcohol on babies. Today, the Kids Preventing Child Abuse presentations teach middle and high school children from Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties in a variety of ways.

For example, children will observe the insides of a shaken, uncooked egg; listen to strategies for working with a crying baby; view X-ray images of the brains of shaken or injured babies; view a video showing comparative behaviors of drug-affected babies and non-drug-affected babies; tour a neo-natal intensive care unit

to view babies with drug-affected complications; and hear a presentation on domestic violence from a law enforcement officer.

During the 1999-2000 school year, approximately 230 students received this training, but this year, KPCA will reach nearly 830 ethnically-diverse boys and girls.

"The importance of engaging young people in learning and incorporating these lessons into their lives is the essence of this program," said Thomas Aschenbrenner of the Northwest Health Foundation, one of the KPCA sponsors.

"It's amazing to see these children learn to care for other children in safe ways."

For more information on the Kids Preventing Child Abuse program, call the Public Relations Department at 503-415-5725.

Underage Smoking Called 'Pediatric Disease'

Despite tobacco industry agreement to stop using advertising icons such as Joe Camel, kids continue to pick up habit

(AP)—The state attorney general says the key to saving kids from a lifelong addiction to nicotine lies in expanding smoke-free environments, programs to quit smoking and reducing youth access to tobacco products.

Hardy Myers offered his recommendations last week after releasing a report by his Committee on Kids and Tobacco.

"Smoking, as our state epidemiologist says, is a pediatric disease," Myers said.

Despite the tobacco industry agreement to stop using advertising icons such as Joe Camel, kids continue to pick up a habit that could prematurely end their own lives,

Myers said.

Carson Clover, an Ashland teen who attended Myers' press conference, said the popular cartoon figure may be gone, but tobacco companies are still targeting his age group.

"They're trying to get us to be lifetime consumers," he said.

According to the attorney general's report, roughly 50,000 Oregon children in grades six through 12 regularly smoke cigarettes, and 90 percent of all smokers were hooked as teens.

But if a child can survive adolescence without taking up the deadly habit, they likely never will, Myers said.

Spending money on youth prevention is the key. "The payoff is that

most of them will not start smoking," he said.

Myers said he wants the Legislature to commit at least \$24 million of the state's tobacco settlement fund to prevention. Currently, the state spends 30 percent of the per capita expenditure recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, or about \$2 per person. The increased funding would boost that level to around \$6 per person. Local governments have already taken steps to combat youth smoking and Myers said he doesn't want the state to interfere with those measures.

"It's extremely important that the integrity of that effort be preserved politically," he said.

International AIDS Funds Approved

The U.S. Senate has passed an amendment crafted by Senators Gordon Smith, R-Ore. and Bill Frist, R-Tenn. to increase next year's funding for international AIDS/HIV efforts by \$200 million.

The regions that will benefit from the funds include not only sub-Saharan Africa but countries in South and Near East Asia and the former Soviet Union, all of which are currently being overwhelmed by the

epidemic. The measure passed by unanimous voice vote.

"These funds are a crucial part of our country's attempts to battle disease and alleviate widespread pain and suffering for some of the world's most impoverished regions," said Smith. "The international AIDS crisis also impacts U.S. national security and economic interests. By increasing these funds, we not only help those suffering from HIV/AIDS,

we also foster political stability and economic development abroad."

In addition to providing additional funds for this year's budget, the amendment also increases AIDS/HIV funding by \$500 million in 2003. Spending levels will reach more than \$1 billion dollars annually within the next two years. Last year, Senator Smith authored similar legislation that provided funding for International HIV/AIDS efforts in Africa.

Half of All U.S. High School Students Have Access to Guns

(AP)— Nearly half of the nation's high school students have easy access to guns, and more than one in five high school boys have taken a weapon to school in the last year, according to a new survey. Forty-seven percent of high school students said they could obtain a gun if they wanted to, while 22 percent of middle school students said they could get a firearm, according to a nationwide survey conducted last year by the non-profit, nonpartisan Josephson Institute of Ethics, based in Marina del Rey, Calif.

Students who use drugs and alcohol at school are even more likely to obtain and carry weapons, the survey of about 15,800 high school and middle school students revealed. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. The study revealed that 19 percent of high school boys and 9 percent of middle school boys admitted to being drunk at school within the last year, compared to 12 percent of high school girls and 5 percent of middle school girls. While 14 percent of high school students

and 11 percent of middle school students reported bringing a weapon to school within the last twelve months, 48 percent of high school students and 57 percent of middle school students who admitted coming to school drunk said they brought a weapon to school during that period. The prevalence of weapons in schools and a cavalier attitude toward violence has taken its toll on students' peace of mind, the survey showed. More than one in three high school students surveyed said they don't feel safe at school.

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