



“Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now”

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Supporting Water Fluoridation

PUBLIC HEALTH

Avel Gordly and
Tricia Tillman

I remember when a neighbor’s child asked if I could help him find a dentist because he had a toothache. He was in the kind of searing pain that no child should have to experience. While he was able to get care, many other children continue to suffer extreme anguish because of poor dental health.

Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher called dental disease a “hidden epidemic” because it inflicts a terrible toll on our children and too often goes unseen. He called tooth decay the most common chronic childhood disease in America, and experts say that’s still true. For those with the resources to get treatment, dental decay is often an expensive burden. But for those without the resources, it means living day after day with a painful infection. Portland’s dental health crisis is particularly affecting families who are already struggling to make ends meet, which makes it one of the most important health equity issues facing our community today.

Children in the Portland Metro area have 40% more decay than in the Seattle, WA area. Children in low-income families are almost three times more likely to have rampant decay. This is unacceptable. It’s not fair that children in Portland don’t have the same basic access to good dental health as children in neighboring cities. This May the people of Portland will have the opportunity to change this. Every trusted health organization that has weighed in, has recommended water fluoridation because it is effective in prevent-

basic level of protection for everyone. When we save money by investing in prevention, we can reinvest taxpayer dollars in other critical community priorities and keep more of our hard earned money.

A vote for water fluoridation is a vote for social justice. It will benefit everyone, but it will especially benefit people who can’t afford to take their kids to the dentist’s office. Because many African American children suffer from rampant decay, it will especially make a profound difference. Dental decay is cumulative, so when

kids have bad teeth, they can have problems for the rest of their lives. With less pain, our children can learn better. With better teeth, our children can eat more healthy food. With a better smile, our children can be more confident and have better economic opportunities. Seriously - how many successful people do you know with decayed teeth?

It’s unfortunate that there is so much misinformation about water fluoridation when the science is clear that it is healthy for our teeth. In fact, there is 100% agreement among major health and science organizations that fluoridation is a healthy practice for all of us. It

Latino Health Coalition, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, the Oregon Pediatric Society, and the Oregon Public Health Association.

Dental decay is painful, expensive, and can be embarrassing, and it’s time we do something about it. The quality of our children’s teeth should not be determined by what side of the river they live on. We must act. We must vote. As two life-long Portlanders, deeply committed to the health and wellbeing of our community – we ask for your support for water fluoridation. Vote YES on May 21st. For more information go to: www.healthykidshealthyportland.org

Portland’s dental health crisis is particularly affecting families who are already struggling to make ends meet

has been in use for more than 65 years in America, and now nearly every major city in America fluoridates its water.

In Portland, fluoridation is being championed by virtually all organizations representing social justice, health, and children’s well-being. The Healthy Kids Healthy Portland campaign includes people we trust such as Michael Alexander and dental experts like Dr. Ken Wright and Jim Smith, and organizations that care deeply about our beloved community like the Urban League of Portland, The Coalition of Communities of Color, Oregon

Honorable Avel Gordly, in her role as State Senator, was a sponsor of the legislation that created the Governor’s Environmental Justice Task Force and the Office of Multicultural Health (now the Office of Equity and Inclusion) in the Oregon Health Authority and former co-chair of the Governor’s Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Health. She believes that water fluoridation is a health equity and an environmental justice issue.

Tricia Tillman, a public health professional, community organizer, environmental justice advocate, and mom, established Multnomah County’s Health Equity Initiative and co-founded the African American Outdoor Association. She promises she and her family will be out knocking on doors this Spring in support of community water fluoridation.

Lessons Learned from Essex and Dorner

In fact, that’s exactly what he

THE CURRY REPORT

George E.
Curry



wrote home to his parents shortly before his death. I interviewed Essex’s mother and father after his bullet-riddled body was pulled

racism while growing up in segregated Tuscaloosa, Ala. during the 1950s and 1960s, that could have been me. Because I had relatives and adults who coached me on how to deal with overt racism, I didn’t go down that bloody path. When I first heard about Christopher Dorner, the former Los Angeles cop who also went on a murder spree, I was reminded of Mark Essex. Like Essex, he complained of reporting racist acts to his supervisor and nothing was done about it. His manifesto, while rambling, gave clear details of his torment.

vents cops from testifying against one another, even when that officer is wrong.

Interestingly, while in the midst of killing innocent people, both Essex and Dorner spared some lives. In his case, Dorner did not shoot the person whose vehicle he hijacked toward the end of the police chase. He also did not harm two maids who had arrived to clean the cabin he had staked out in the mountains.

At the Howard Johnson hotel in New Orleans, a Black maid said Essex told her, “Don’t worry. We’re not killing Blacks today, just Whites.”

In the aftermath of the deaths of Mark Essex and Christopher Dorner, there is something we can take away from their lives.

One of our greatest challenges when dealing with young people, especially, is that we must teach them how to survive life’s slings and arrows without going over the edge. It would be interesting if community-wide forums were organized for young people to listen to what their elders went through. Not just listen to them, but learn from them.

How do you manage to cope during difficult times? Don’t tell me, tell someone close to you. It just might save their life.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine, is editor-in-chief of the NNPA.

Of the thousands of stories I covered since I began my career in 1970, one has affected me more than any other. It was the violent death of 23-year-old Mark Essex on Jan. 7, 1973

from the roof of the Howard Johnson Hotel and sent back to Emporia for burial. Family members told me how a quiet, happy go lucky youth became embittered in the Navy. So bitter that he began hating all White people and was never the same again.

I suspect the reason the story has stuck with me for four decades is because I realized that had I not been able to handle the stifling