

THE SKANNER®

CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



For The Skanner news alerts
Text "NEWS" to
503-715-0890 or
scan this QR code



FIRST LADY



First Lady Michelle Obama collected toys from military children during a Toys for Tots event at the Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling Distribution Center in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 19, 2013.

(OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY CHUCK KENNEDY)

Drop in Teens Drug Use

Teens are getting the message that Spice and K2 are unsafe

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fewer teens are trying fake marijuana known by such names as K2 and Spice, apparently getting the message that these cheap new drugs are highly dangerous, according to the government's annual survey on drug use.

Synthetic marijuana is thought to have appeared in the U.S. in 2009, and soon after came a spike in emergency room visits, even deaths, as the drug caught on among young people.

About 8 percent of high school seniors said they've used some type of synthetic marijuana this year, according to the report released Wednesday by the National Institutes of Health. That's a sharp drop from the 11 percent of seniors who'd experimented with fake pot in 2012.

Use of synthetic drugs among younger teens dropped as well — and fewer than 1 percent of students also are trying another new kind of illegal drug known as bath salts, said University of Michigan professor Lloyd Johnston, who heads the annual Monitoring the Future survey of more than 40,000 students in the 8th, 10th and 12th grades.

"The message has gotten out that these are dangerous drugs," Johnston said. "Their ever-changing ingredients can be unusually powerful. Users really don't know what they are getting."

Synthetic marijuana is made of dried plant material sprayed with various chemicals and packaged to look like pot. The Drug Enforcement Administration banned a number of chemicals used to make synthetic marijuana in 2011, but new chemical varieties continue to appear. Earlier this year, federal health officials discovered that two new types of fake pot had sickened more than 200 people in a month in Colorado.

The annual survey also found that teenage perceptions of the dangers of marijuana use continued to decline. In 1993, more than 60 percent of high school seniors considered marijuana dangerous, while this year less

See TRAINS on page 3

See SYNTHETIC DRUGS on page 3

Oil Trains Raise Safety Concerns

After Lac Megantic disaster cities worry about transporting oil by rail

Josh Funk and
Matthew Brown,
Associated Press

WOLF POINT, Mont. (AP) — It's tough to miss the trains hauling crude oil out of the Northern Plains. They are growing more frequent by the day, mile-long processions of black tank cars that rumble through wheat fields and towns, along rivers and national parks.

As common as they have become across the U.S. and

Canada, officials in dozens of towns and cities where the oil trains travel say they are concerned with the possibility of a major derailment, spill or explosion, while their level of preparation varies widely.

Stoking those fears was the July crash of a crude train from the Bakken oil patch in Lac Megantic, Quebec — not far from the Maine border — that killed 47 people. A Nov. 8 train derailment in rural Alabama where several oil cars exploded reinforced them.

"It's a grave concern," said Dan Sietsema, the emergency coordinator in northeastern Montana's Roosevelt County, where oil trains now pass regularly through the county seat of Wolf Point. "It has the ability to wipe out a town like Wolf Point."

The number of carloads hauled by U.S. railroads has surged in recent years, from 10,840 in 2009 to a projected 400,000 this year.

Despite the increase, the rate of accidents has stayed relative-

ly steady. An Associated Press review of federal hazardous material accident records show most of those incidents involved small quantities of oil.

Railroads say 99.997 percent of hazardous materials shipments reach destinations safely. Representatives said they work hard to prevent accidents and make sure emergency responders are prepared, by training about 20,000 firefighters and others annually.

"It's not something to be

INDEX

News	2,3,6
Calendar	2
Opinion	4
A&E	2,8
Bids/Classifieds.....	7

Economists Say Inequality Hurts Us All

The economy suffers when wealth is concentrated at the top

Christopher S. Rugaber, AP
Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The growing gap between the richest Americans and everyone else isn't bad just for individuals. It's hurting the U.S. economy.

So says a majority of more than three dozen economists surveyed last week by The Associated Press. Their concerns tap

into a debate that's intensified as middle-class pay has stagnated while wealthier households have thrived.

A key source of the economists' concern: Higher pay and outside stock market gains are flowing mainly to affluent Americans. Yet these households spend less of their money than do low- and middle-income consumers who make up most of the population but whose pay is barely rising.

"What you want is a broader spending base," says Scott Brown, chief economist at Raymond James, a financial advisory firm. "You want more people spending money."

Spending by wealthier Americans, given the weight of their dollars, does help drive the economy. But analysts say the economy would be better able to sustain its growth if

See INCOME GAP on page 3