

It's back to school time, but are Oregon's kids really ready?

In Columbia County, more than 50 percent of three- and four-year-olds living in poverty can't get into Oregon's public pre-Kindergarten program because there isn't enough room. And overall in Oregon, only 41 percent of preschool-aged children are enrolled in a pre-K program, public or private. Yet studies universally show that a quality preschool experience makes all the difference in future productivity and learning.

In fact, according to educators and local statistics, there is a direct correlation to children arriving at kindergarten unprepared and future poor academic performance in school. Further still, more and more studies demonstrate that not just any pre-K will do; a quality preschool setting that addresses children's social and emotional development, motor skills, cognitive skills and overall health is crucial to development.

"Ready for School," a group of business leaders, philanthro-

pists and children's advocates, has started a statewide dialogue about this issue.

According to Swati Adarkar, executive director of The Children's Institute an independent nonprofit research and action group and one of the children's groups that is part of the Ready for School initiative — Oregon students who start behind academically tend to stay behind, which often leads to negative and expensive outcomes.

"The benefits of early childhood education are overwhelming. When kids show up for kindergarten and haven't had the benefit of preschool learning, it creates a domino effect. A recent study of disadvantaged children showed that those who don't participate in quality pre-K programs have significantly lower achievement scores, are less likely to graduate from high school, are less likely to be employed adults and are much more likely to be arrested," said Adarkar. "The

link is very strong, and the implications are critical for us to understand."

Adarkar adds that third grade reading levels are a widely accepted predictor of long-term school success, yet in 2004, 18 percent of Oregon's third graders were not reading at their grade level. "And unfortunately, data shows that a student who is not a modestly skilled reader by the end of the third grade is far more likely to not graduate from high school," said Adarkar.

Furthermore, Adarkar cites that 90 percent of brain development occurs in children by age six, so those who go without early childhood education miss the opportunity for critical cognitive development and struggle to catch up.

Because of all these early childhood education realities in Oregon, The Children's Institute has teamed with business leaders, childhood development experts, children's advo-

cates, philanthropists and educators to form Ready for School, a consortium that is working to raise public awareness of the importance of kindergarten preparedness and enrolling more of Oregon's children in high quality pre-K educational programs.

"For many years, the education debate in Oregon has centered on school funding for K through 12. While this is an important debate, we are missing an opportunity to make an investment where it will count the most," said Richard Alexander, chair of Ready For School. "The financial benefits of school preparedness make it hard to find a better investment for Oregon, as studies show that, among disadvantaged children, there is a nearly \$13 return for \$1 invested in a quality preschool program. This return is money saved on future public expenditures like special education, welfare and crime. And among all children, there is

still a very significant estimated 4-to-1 return on investment."

In the months ahead, Ready for School will be presenting nearly two years worth of research with additional study results, proposed solutions, and information and tips for parents and educators.

Until then, The Children's Institute has created an issue brief available to the public entitled "Early Childhood Development: Investing in Oregon's Economic Future" which contains background information and statistics on pre-K education, and is available for download at <www.childinst.org>.

Ready for School is a group of business leaders, philanthropists and children's advocates working to address issues related to school readiness in Oregon. For more information about this initiative, contact Swati Adarkar at 503-595-0621.

Columbia County Fair 4-H results show talent of children involved

Following are partial results from the 4-H competition at the Columbia County Fair. Due to space limitations, only results within *The Independent's* circulation area are included. More results will be published in the October 20 issue of *The Independent*.

HORSE AND PONY

Gaming, Pole Bending, Intermediate: White Award — Jessica

Teeters, Boring; Megan Hieronimus, Mist; Katie Wilson, Mist; Maiké Fox, St. Helens; Jessica Greiner, St. Helens; Lindsay Paulson, St. Helens; Mackenzie Carr, Vernonia; Ashley Paleck, Vernonia; Katherine Van Winkle, Warren.

Gaming, Pole Bending, Senior: Reserve Champion — Torie Clement, Vernonia.

White Award — Torie Clement, Vernonia; Cassandra Teeters, Boring; Whitney Johnson, Clatskanie; Jocelyn Hepner, Portland; Kristin

Girt, Rainier; Jessica Keene, Rainier; Janaya Misner, Sandy; JoAnna Fischer, St. Helens; Jamie Hanna, St. Helens; Stephanie Carr, Vernonia; Kayla Dawson, Warren; Sierra Paxton, Warren; Rachel Swanson, Warren.

Gaming, Flag Race, Junior: White Award — Kelsey Lanphear, Deer Island; Nora Hieronimus, Mist; Jenny Holdner, Scappoose; Jaci Lessard, Scappoose; Christine Mapes, Scappoose; Brianna Carr, Vernonia; Kaitlyn Carr, Vernonia.

Gaming, Flag Race, Intermediate: White Award — Nicole Baker, Rainier; Christy Moore, Boring; Megan Hieronimus, Mist; Katie Wilson, Mist; Alishea Jones, Rainier; Maiké Fox, St. Helens; Jessica Greiner, St. Helens; Mackenzie Carr, Vernonia; Ashley Paleck, Vernonia; Katherine Van

Winkle, Warren.

Gaming, Flag Race, Senior: Reserve Champion — Torie Clement, Vernonia.

Blue Award — Torie Clement, Vernonia; Kristin Girt, Rainier; Lacy Osterman, Rainier; Shanna Townsend, Scappoose; JoAnna Fischer, St. Helens; Alice Monroe, St. Helens.

White Award — Rachel Swanson, Warren; Casandra Teeters, Boring; Whitney Johnson, Clatskanie; Riley Hepner, Portland; Jessica Keene, Rainier; Jamie Hanna, St. Helens; Stephanie Carr, Vernonia; Kelley D'Agrosa, Warren; Kayla Dawson, Warren.

RABBITS

Palomino, Senior Buck: Red Award — Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

Netherland Dwarf, Senior Buck: Reserve Champion —

Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

Blue Award — Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

Pen of Three Fryers: Champion — Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

Reserve Champion — Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

Blue Award — Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

Showmanship, Senior: Champion — Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

Blue Award — Amanda Watts, Vernonia; Micele Kirsch, Columbia City.

CAVIES

American, Senior Boar: White Award — Amanda Watts, Vernonia.

SHEEP

Crossbred Meat Breeds, Spring Ewe Lamb: Blue Award — Katie Tatman, Vernonia.

Market Sheep: Blue Award — Whitney Johnson, Clatskanie; Elizabeth Green, Clatskanie; Michael Keller, Portland; Shelly Crape, Rainier; Cary McDaniel, Rainier; Jewelée Stebbins, Rainier; Mary Jo Itel, Scappoose; Ashley Savage, St. Helens; Brandy Savage, St. Helens; Courtney Savage, St. Helens; Juliana Pelster, Vernonia.

Market, Heavy Feeder: Champion — Sarah Tatman, Vernonia.

Reserve Champion — Jacob Tatman, Vernonia.

Blue Award — Sarah Tatman, Vernonia; Jacob Tatman, Vernonia; Robbie Greisen, Scappoose.

Crossbred (black face) Wool: See page 11



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