

Programs invest in healthy kids

BY CASEY HANS
and DOUG FUNK
STAFF WRITERS

Oakland County child rights advocate Wendy Shepherd-Bates said she was ecstatic last week after hearing President Bill Clinton stress prevention programs for young children.

"Healthier kids make for a healthier society. It's an investment. If you put children first, you're putting society first," said Shepherd-Bates, program coordinator for FamilyWorks of Troy. "If you do not raise children to be healthy, you will not have a workforce in 18 years."

Clinton's plan calls for increased money for programs for disadvantaged preschoolers, including the 27-year-old federal preschool Head Start program. He also called for expanding the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program.

Head Start includes education, immunization and nutrition services for children in underprivileged families.

Some 415 children already are enrolled in the Pontiac Head Start program, another 950 in other Oakland County communities except Southfield, which administers its own Head Start program, according to Dorothy Davis, Pontiac Head Start director. She projected that another

Pontiac 600 children could be served if money for staff, rent and supplies were available.

Head Start has contracts with school districts in Farmington, West Bloomfield and Rochester Hills, Davis said, but she couldn't provide specific numbers of participants. "They're there. They're everywhere."

She declined to specify how much money it would take other than to agree it would be in the millions of dollars. She also declined to reveal how much the Oakland Head Start program currently spends.

"It's a comprehensive child development," Davis said. "We work with the total child. We have nurses on staff, mental health specialists on staff, nutritionists, dietitians, social workers. We get the parents involved with the children volunteering in the classroom."

Reaching those eligible
Officials working in the Women, Infants and Children program see additional funding being used to open the program to those not being served instead of increasing the level of present benefits.

"If there are additional dollars, I certainly hope we would get more staff to serve more clients, get the word out," said Jane LaGrow, a WIC supervisor in Oak-

land County. "I question whether we are reaching all the pregnant women who can benefit."

Some 9,800 people in Oakland County — pregnant and nursing women plus children under 5 years of age at medical or nutritional risk — now receive food coupons to supplement their diets.

The food coupons, exchanged at area markets, average about \$50 monthly per person who qualify and are administered through the county health departments, LaGrow said.

Even communities perceived as affluent are touched.

"We know from our experience people come from all over Oakland County for WIC, practically every zip code," said Jean Egan, public health nutrition supervisor for Oakland County.

"I think it (Clinton's proposal) will increase the enrollment. I don't think it will increase benefits," LaGrow said.

LaGrow has been involved with the WIC program for 16 years, almost from its inception.

"Those of us who have been here forever really believe it makes a difference," she said.

Help for working poor
In another area, the working poor would stand to benefit from Clinton's call to expand the

earned income tax credit. The figure being bandied about — raising the ceiling from the current \$22,370 to \$30,000.

"Definitely more people would be eligible, and I'm going to make an assumption dollars would increase as well," said Ely Maccani, public affairs specialist in the Detroit IRS office.

The maximum credit this year is \$2,151 for one child, \$2,211 for two or more.

A credit is better than a deduction because it's a direct offset of tax due.

Some 359,000 families in Michigan received earned income benefits totalling \$273.4 million in the 1991 filing year, Maccani said.

"We estimate in the state of Michigan, that 50,000 more families could be eligible (now) for the credit, but they're not aware of it or don't file for it."

"The credit is available to anyone filing joint, head of household or single as long as you had a job and earned income and had a child live with you at least half a year," Maccani said.

"It's aimed at lower-income families with children. It's designed to help them out and put more money in their pockets."

FASHION CALENDAR

FRIDAY, FEB. 26

Michael Casey

Michael Casey spring trunk show, with informal modeling 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., in Couture, Level Three, at Neiman Marcus at the Somerset Collection in Troy.

Spring collection

Trunk show of spring collection by designers Hino & Madet, shown with representative Elaine Louis, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Saturday, Feb. 27, at Roz & Sherm in the Bloomfield Plaza, Telegraph and Maple roads, Bloomfield Township.

Donna Kanan

Donna Kanan spring '93 collection with special representative, and informal modeling 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Designer Sportswear, second floor, at Saks Fifth Avenue at the Somerset Collection in Troy.

Alvin's Bride

Trunk shows of Bianchi fashions through Sunday, Feb. 28, at Alvin's Bride, 249 Pierce, Birmingham. For more information call 644-7492.

Private label

Trunk show of Roz & Sherm private label special occasion wear, along with premiere show of its Ciner Jewelry line, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Saturday, March 6, at shop in Bloomfield Plaza, Maple and Telegraph roads, Bloomfield Township.

Spring fashions

Series of spring fashion shows: two shows each day at 2 and 7 p.m. Thursday-Friday, March 4-5, and 1 and 4 p.m. Saturday, March 6, at the Rotunda at the Somerset Collection in Troy. No admission fee, but reservations required by calling 643-6350.

OU offers special rate on tours

Oakland University's Meadow Brook Hall joins African American Celebration Month by inviting OU students, faculty and staff and their families — as well as the general public — to tour the 100-room auto baron mansion at reduced rates.

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