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The State of America's Children



Children's Defense Fund

Yearbook 1997

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From the desk of



KERBY T. ALVY, Ph.D.
Executive Director

7/31/97

Jennifer -

Here are copies of the latest
newsletter of our National Parenting
Instructors Association which
highlights the President's and First
Lady's support of parenting education
efforts.

I eagerly await hearing
from you!

Warmly,

Kerby T. Alvy

CENTER FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF CHILD CARING

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THE Parenting Instructor

NEWSLETTER OF THE
NATIONAL PARENTING
INSTRUCTORS ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 1997

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Greater Support from Washington for The Effective Parenting Movement

The beginning of Spring in Washington, D.C., with cherry blossoms blooming and a spirit of optimism in the air, was heralded in by public statements and educational gatherings that bode well for the Effective Parenting Movement to improve the overall quality of child rearing in the nation.

President Clinton led the way with stunning statements like those which follow. These declarations, which closely resemble those made by leaders in the parenting education field over the last thirty years, were embedded in an announcement in *Newsweek* Magazine about the Coalition for America's Children (1-888-544-KIDS). Mr. Clinton declared:

"Every day, I work hard to meet the challenges that come with being President of the United States. It's a tough job. But there's a tougher job than being the President. It's being a parent. With drugs, crime, and other problems facing our children today, it's tougher than ever being a good parent. It's a job that none of us can do alone."

By statements like this from the country's highest ranking official, the Effective Parenting Movement gains greater credibility. The Movement, which relies heavily on the use of parenting education programs that

are based on research into the conditions that help children to become healthy and productive adults, was also uplifted by an extraordinary event that took place in the White House in April. The President and the First Lady invited some of the country's premiere experts in child development to review the latest findings on the way young children's brains develop and to discuss the implications for public policy and parental care.

**"THERE'S A TOUGHER
JOB THAN BEING
THE PRESIDENT.
IT'S BEING A PARENT."**

The neurobiologists, physicians, and other specialists in early childhood development described research showing how quickly the brains of babies develop after birth, creating trillions of neural connections that either flourish or die off in response to experience. The vast majority of these synapses are found during the first three years of life.

"Experience is essential for brain wiring," said Carla Shatz, a professor of neurobiology at UC Berkeley, as she explained why it is essential for parents to touch, talk and read to, say and otherwise nurture and stimulate their babies.

The value of research in orienting parents how best to guide the growth of young children was also the focus of a special edition of *Newsweek* Magazine that hit the stands the same week as the White House meeting. This extraordinary edition entitled, "Your Child: from Birth to Three (Spring/Summer, 1997), contains the latest research findings and a series of very practical articles, such as "How to Talk Parentese

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