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April 15, 2000, Saturday, AM cycle

SECTION: Washington Dateline

LENGTH: 645 words

HEADLINE: Clinton announces new grants to prevent youth violence

BYLINE: By LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Marking the first anniversary of the shooting deaths at Columbine High School, President Clinton announced \$120 million in new federal grants Saturday to place more police officers in schools and help even the youngest kids cope with their problems.

"In our national struggle against youth violence we must not fail our children; our future depends on it," the president said in his weekly radio address.

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"We need to talk about safety and security in every house in America," Clinton said.

Republican critics said the federal government is a clumsy middleman in trying to cope with problems that should be addressed locally. They cast doubt on whether the teen conference would accomplish anything, accused Clinton of ignoring media violence, and said he should support stiff jail sentences for anyone carrying a firearm in a violent or drug-related crime.

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Finally, Clinton said the Education Department has earmarked \$20 million for local proposals to create or expand counseling programs for elementary schoolchildren. "We have seen all too clearly that even our youngest children need our help," he said.

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On April 20, 1999, two students at Columbine High in Littleton, Colo., fatally shot 12 students and a teacher before killing themselves.

Clinton's proposals drew instant comment from Republicans.

"The **White House Conference on teen-agers** is sure to drag national headlines and attention, but unlikely to add new light to these troubling questions," said Rep. J.C. Watts Jr., R-Okla., chairman of the House Republican Conference. He said the solutions will be found around America's kitchen tables, "not from Washington or from posturing politicians."

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 16, 2000

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Clintons to host conference on bringing up teens

By Kathy Kiely
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON -- It's a topic that parents by the millions talk about every day over kitchen tables and office fax machines. And next month, President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will give it bully pulpit treatment when they host a White House conference on raising teens.

The White House Conference on Teenagers: Raising Responsible and Resourceful Youth will take place May 2, less than two weeks after the first anniversary of the shootings April 20 at Columbine High School, where a pair of teens killed 12 classmates and a teacher before turning their guns on themselves.

A formal announcement of plans for the conference is expected from the administration today.

Concern over youth violence is only one of several reasons the Clintons have decided to host the conference, according to a senior administration official involved in planning the conference.

Among other things, the first couple want to focus attention on new research that indicates that preteen years are a key time for brain development and that -- contrary to many parents' beliefs -- kids want and need more direction from their parents.

The Clintons want to discuss the challenges and risks of raising what White House officials believe is one of the fastest-growing and most diverse groups of teens in U.S. history. There were 35.3 million Americans ages 10-18 as of September 1999, according to the latest estimates from the Census Bureau.

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The day-long conference will feature parents, teens, educators, policymakers and other experts. Among the topics expected to be discussed are drug and alcohol abuse, violent behavior, sexual activity and the effects of the news media on children and parents.

After an opening session, the conferees will break into small discussion groups, led by members of Congress and Clinton administration officials.

The conference is a reflection of Hillary Clinton's long-time interest in children's issues.

It follows up on a similar forum that she and the president hosted in 1997 on early childhood development.

It also will give the first lady a high-profile forum to appeal to women, a constituency that is expected to be key in her New York Senate race.

Her likely Republican opponent, New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, has also been wooing female voters.



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Subject: more WIRE STORIES -- WH Conf on Teens

Clintons convene conference on teens

By LORI SANTOS

WASHINGTON, May 2 (UPI) -- President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton convened a White House conference on teens Tuesday, addressing issues facing parents and young people under today's added pressures of the work place and the Internet, along with the more traditional problems.

As part of the day's events, Clinton signed an executive order barring discrimination against parents in the federal workplace. The order mirrors legislation pending on Capitol Hill and prohibits employers in the executive branch from acting on assumptions that parents cannot satisfy the requirements of a particular position.

"The goal of this order simply says, 'no glass ceiling for parents,'" Clinton said in the opening session. "The job they are doing at home is more important anyway."

Clinton adviser Bruce Reed said the executive action does "for the federal workplace what we would like Congress to do for the country."

He said, for example, a candidate for a job or promotion cannot be penalized for having to be home by 6 p.m.

The Clintons also released two studies as part of the first-ever conference, one a report by the president's Council of Economic Advisors that concluded teenagers whose parents are engaged and involved in their lives are more likely to excel in school and avoid risk behaviors.

A YMCA poll found that parents are most anxious about drug and alcohol use and violence while teens are most concerned about "not having enough time together" with their parents, and their education.

"The good news is that the teenagers are far healthier, more prosperous and look forward to more promising lives than ever before in our history," Clinton said, citing declines in youth violence, homicide, suicide, pregnancy and drug use.

The down side, he said, was teen smoking, drug use and gun violence "are still far too high."

One startling finding, Clinton said, was that teenagers who have dinner with their parents five nights a week are far more likely to avoid smoking, drinking, violence, suicide and drugs. The first lady said she and the president had tried to do just that every evening with their daughter Chelsea, now 20 and a junior at Stanford University. The three would eat together in the small kitchen of the private quarters upstairs in the White House and the Clintons even avoided going out much or to the Camp David presidential retreat to be around for their

daughter.

"All of us are here because we believe there is no group of Americans more full of promise or potential," Hillary Clinton said. "But we also believe there is no group of Americans more in need of the support, guidance and committed efforts of all of than today's teenagers."

The public proceedings, however, broke little new ground, focusing instead on rather standard prescriptions for parents to keep lines of communication open, spend more time with their teenagers and monitor what movies they watch and their use of the Internet.

One teen who took part in the conference, 14-year-old Gabriella Contreros, said she thought it would be helpful if families could eat dinner together every night but some, like her own, are split up and often work late in the evening.

Contreros, an 8th grader from Tuscon, Ariz., said the discussions put little out there she hadn't heard before.

"Being a teenager, I kind of knew a lot of it," she said.

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BC-CLINTON-TEENS

^White House teen conference has tips, research

By Randall Mikkelsen

WASHINGTON, May 2 (Reuters) - Want to raise ``responsible, resourceful'' teenagers? Listen well, and make sure they do their chores.

The first White House conference on teens, presided over by President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, featured such time-tested advice, plus new research showing early teenage years are a crucial step in brain development, and called for more government steps to help parents and teens.

``Anybody that thinks that we've done everything we need to do to help parents with teenagers hasn't had teenagers and hasn't been around lately,'' Clinton said.

The conference brought together experts on adolescents, as well as actors Danny DeVito and Rhea Perlman, who are active in children's issues.

It also showcased Mrs. Clinton, the Democratic candidate for a U.S. Senate seat in New York, who has long made children's issues a cornerstone of her political agenda. She wore a pair of reading glasses, infrequently seen in public, as she moderated panel discussions.

At the session, the president announced an executive order forbidding federal employers from discriminating against workers with families, saying he aimed to eliminate any ``glass ceiling'' blocking advancement of people with children at home.

He called for expanding family-leave legislation and increasing funding for after-school programmes.

Clinton also released a report by his Council on Economic Advisers, which he billed as a good news/bad news snapshot of the condition of American teenagers.

``The good news is that the teenagers are far healthier, more prosperous, and look forward to more promising lives than ever before in our history,'' he said. He cited figures showing high school graduation and college enrollment rates at all-time highs, and declines in

youth violence, homicide, suicide, teen pregnancy, and, recently, drug use.

Major challenges include still-excessive rates in the United States of teen smoking, drug use and pregnancy. ``And despite a marked decline in teen homicide over the past few years, still far too many communities are scarred by gun violence," he said.

The report highlighted the importance of parents spending time with and listening to their children. ``Teenagers that had dinner with their parents five nights a week are far more likely to avoid smoking, drinking, violence, suicide and drugs. This held true for single-parent as well as two-parent families, across all income and racial groups," Clinton said.

bc-CLINTONS-TEENS

^ Clintons stress quality time for parents, teens

^ Attn: Note Web site address at end of story. YMCA of the USA in 11th graf is cq

BY SERGIO BUSTOS

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON - The nation's first couple Tuesday urged parents to spend more time with their teen-age children, citing a national poll that found a significant number of families share few meals together and that parents and children seldom talk about sensitive subjects as sex, dating, drugs or alcohol.

The poll was released as part of a daylong White House conference exploring the pressure-filled lives of teen-agers and their parents.

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, taking a break from her New York Senate campaign, led the discussion that included educators, members of Congress, and parents and teen-agers from across the country.

``If you ask teens and you listen to teens, you can hear, directly and indirectly, their voices telling us that growing up today feels tougher than ever before," Clinton said. ``I happen to think that's right."

``And if it's tough to be a teen-ager today, it's probably even tougher to be a parent," she said.

President Clinton, whom the first lady introduced as ``my co-parent," used the conference to announce he had signed an executive order that prohibits discrimination against working parents employed by the federal government.

``The goal of this order simply says, no glass ceiling for parents," said Clinton. ``The job they're doing at home is more important, anyway, and if they can do your job, you ought not to stop them."

The conference, ``Raising Responsible and Resourceful Youth," included sessions that examined such topics as how the news media influence youth and how communities can better support parents and teen-agers.

The national poll, conducted by the YMCA of the USA, surveyed 200 children age 12-15 and 200 parents of children in the same age range by telephone, and found stark differences between the two generations.

Among the findings:

- Teens are three times more likely than their parents to say that ``not having enough time together" is their biggest concern. Family time tied with education as the top priorities of teens.

- Parents are far more concerned by outside threats such as drugs and alcohol than

they are about family time. Quality time ranks fourth among parents' concerns.

- About 36 percent of parents reported that their teens spend most of their free time in front of a computer or television screen. Almost one in three teens agreed.

- 34 percent of both parents and teen-agers blame parents' workload as the main reason families don't spend more time together.

- As teens get older, parents talk to them less about sex. Only one in six 15-year-olds surveyed reported talking to their parents about sex.

- Only three in 10 teens said their parents discussed drugs or alcohol with them.

- While most parents (64 percent) believe their teen-age children share the same basic values, less than half of the teen-agers (48 percent) agreed with their parents' values.

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For more information about the White House Conference on Teenagers: Raising Responsible and Resourceful Youth, visit the White House Web site: www.whitehouse.gov

^AM-White House-Teens,550

^White House holds conference on raising teens

^By DEB RIECHMANN= ^Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) Parenting teens is just as important as holding down a government job, President Clinton said Tuesday in signing an executive order prohibiting discrimination against parents in the federal workplace.

``Believe it or not, there are still some employers who are reluctant to hire or to promote employees who have children at home," Clinton said at a White House conference on raising and mentoring responsible teens.

``The goal of this order simply says no glass ceiling for parents," Clinton said.

The order ensures that workers are not discriminated against simply because they are parents. It applies only to federal workers and does not require approval from Congress.

``The job they're doing at home is more important anyway, and if they can do your job, you ought not to stop them," Clinton said to employers of parents.

Parents, teens, teachers, youth workers and others attended the daylong conference, which was moderated by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Topics included what parents and communities can do to help teens succeed, how parents can spend more time with their teens, and the media's effect on youth and parenting.

Today's teens aren't different, society is, Mrs. Clinton said.

``Rather than trying to make our kids somehow adapt, we should be thinking about ways that our institutions can change and be more supportive of our own kids and provide what our children have always needed the kind of connectedness and support and love and discipline that every young person really wants and needs from us."

She announced an Internet site for teen-agers (<http://www.americasteens.gov>) to help them with homework, hobbies and careers. The site is being developed by 17 federal agencies. In addition, she announced that another site will be created where parents can find information about current media ratings systems.

Republican National Committee spokesman Chris Paulitz complained that the conference relied heavily on liberal-minded panelists. Mrs. Clinton ``used to say it takes a village to raise a child," Paulitz said. ``Now all it takes is partisan Democrats and Hollywood moguls."

Actor and producer Danny DeVito, father of two teens and a 12-year-old, and his wife, actress Rhea Perlman, spoke in the East Room of the White House about successful after school initiatives in Los Angeles.

``We have to listen to kids," DeVito said. ``There are so many things going through their heads. They're confused. They're mad, or sad. What do they do if they don't have anybody who they can trust or turn to?"

But just being at home doesn't mean parents are emotionally involved with their teens, said Dr. Robert Blum, director of general pediatrics and adolescent health at the University of Minnesota. Going shopping or tossing a football does not bond parents and teens, he said.

``I challenge adults to include us, encourage us, have faith in youth of all ages," said Gabriella Contreras, a 14-year-old activist in Tuscon, Ariz. ``Volunteer with us to make a difference in our community, to enable us to have a voice ... or just get involved with our daily lives."

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April 16, 2000, Sunday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A09

LENGTH: 200 words

HEADLINE: President, First Lady to Host Summit On Teenagers

DATELINE: PALO ALTO, Calif., April 15

BODY:

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Clinton said he and the first lady, a Democratic candidate for a U.S. Senate seat in New York, will hold the conference on May 2 and bring in parents and **teenagers**, experts and educators "to talk through the challenges of raising responsible children."

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April 16, 2000, Sunday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section 1; Page 30; Column 5; National Desk

LENGTH: 376 words

HEADLINE: President and First Lady Plan Conference on School Violence

BYLINE: Reuters

DATELINE: PALO ALTO, Calif., April 15

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One of the concerns in the aftermath of Columbine and other school shootings is that teachers, students and parents need to pay more attention to warning signs from troubled youths.

"Those of us who are parents have perhaps the greatest responsibility," Mr. Clinton said.

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The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

April 16, 2000, Sunday

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. B1

LENGTH: 860 words

HEADLINE: LR schools grab share of \$ 41 million in grants Clinton lauds 23 districts for safety initiatives

BYLINE: KIMBERLY GILLESPIE, ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

BODY:

President Clinton announced grants for 23 school districts -- including Little Rock, due to receive \$ 2.2 million each of the next three years -- that he said have found successful, comprehensive approaches to help troubled young people.

Clinton announced a total of \$ 41 million in grants, which vary in amount, to school districts across the country through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative during his weekly radio address Saturday. Little Rock is the only school district in Arkansas to receive one of the grants.

The initiative supports urban, rural and suburban schools that use community-based and public school services to prevent violence in schools and provide opportunities for healthy child development.

"These districts are bringing school nurses and counselors together to respond to warning signs like depression or bullying," Clinton said. "They are improving classroom security and expanding after-school and mentoring programs."

Linda Young Austin, the Little Rock district's director of planning and development, said some of the money will be used to fill new positions for staff members responsible for security on buses and for substance abuse prevention.

Austin said the need for those positions was brought up last year during discussions about revising the district's strategic plan and the district's revised desegregation and education plan.

"Both of those plans identify priorities and goals of which the district has taken the opportunity to fulfill some of the objectives that we've not been able to fulfill [before] through this grant opportunity," Austin said.

The district also plans to hire full-time licensed clinicians to deal with mental-health issues at each of the eight middle schools next year and to staff short-term suspension centers to be set up in neighborhoods -- at churches, for example -- for students suspended for less than 10 days.

Grant money will allow the district to expand a program designed to teach teens parenting skills and provide them with strategies to stay in school. The district will also start a program to help parents communicate better with their **teen-agers**.

"A lot of times parents don't know how to ask the right questions, nor do they know how to ask the right questions if their children get into trouble," Austin said. "This program just helps them figure out what kinds of questions to ask and how to ask them and get answers."

The grant will also be used for violence-prevention and peer-mediation programs to help students learn to get along and communicate positively with one another.

Austin said the Little Rock Police Department, New Futures for Youth and the Centers for Youth and Families helped district officials put together a proposal for increasing security and improving mental-health services in middle schools.

"This is a very positive thing happening for us because it's going to allow us to move forward in a lot of different strategic planning goals," Superintendent Les Carnine said. "We're very fortunate to have gotten this grant."

The three-year grant is from the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education.

Marking the first anniversary of the shooting deaths at Columbine High School, Clinton announced \$ 120 million in federal grants Saturday for a variety of things, including placing more police officers in schools and helping even the youngest kids cope with problems.

Besides the \$ 41 million grants for schools, Clinton:

Announced that he and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will hold a **White House Conference on Teen-agers** on May 2 to "talk through the challenges of raising responsible children."

Unveiled that school districts across the country will receive the \$ 60 million, fifth round of funding for "COPS in School," a Justice Department program that helps pay the costs of placing police officers in schools to help make them safe for students and teachers. The money will be used to provide 452 officers in schools in more than 220 communities.

Said the U.S. Department of Education has earmarked \$ 20 million for local proposals to create or expand counseling programs for elementary-age children.

"As we prepare next week to mark the one-year anniversary of the tragedy at Columbine High School, our thoughts turn to the safety of our communities, schools and children," Clinton said. "All of us -- parents, schools, communities and government -- share responsibility to keep kids safe."

On April 20, 1999, two students at Columbine High in Littleton, Colo., fatally shot 12 students and a teacher before killing themselves.

Clinton's proposals drew instant comment from Republicans.

Republican critics said the federal government is a clumsy middleman in trying to cope with problems that should be addressed locally. They cast doubt on whether the teen conference would accomplish anything, accused Clinton of ignoring media violence and said he should support stiff jail sentences for anyone carrying a firearm in a violent or drug-related crime.

Information for this article was contributed by The Associated Press

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 18, 2000

FOCUSTM

Search: General News;White House w/3 conference and teenagers

To narrow this search, please enter a word or phrase:

Example: House of Representatives

April 20, 2000, Thursday

SECTION: EDITORIALS; THE MONITOR'S VIEW; Pg. 12

LENGTH: 755 words

HEADLINE: Columbine's Flowers

HIGHLIGHT:

The search for ways to protect, and better serve, youth

BODY:

A year after the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., the country still struggles for an adequate response. This, not unlike the Oklahoma City bombing also being remembered this week, was an event almost beyond comprehension, happening in a setting of prosperity and civic pride. It appeared to contradict every easy assumption about American life.

In what seemed a terrible climax to a series of violent incidents at public schools, two young men, the products of middle-class suburban families, took guns and explosives to their school and methodically tried to kill as many fellow students and teachers as they could before turning their guns on themselves.

Twelve were killed and 23 injured. There have been few darker days in recent American memory.

But it's a darkness the nation is determined to emerge from. The year since Columbine has been abuzz with ways to prevent such tragedies and deal with underlying causes:

- *More emphasis is being put on character education, conflict resolution courses, and other ways of helping young citizens understand themselves better and solve problems.

- *Related to the Columbine anniversary, President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will host a **White House Conference on Teenagers** May 2. The purpose of the gathering, says the president, is to "talk through the challenges of raising responsible children."

- *Countless schools have instituted stronger security measures. Just as important, administrators, teachers, and parents have striven to do a better job of identifying and helping students who might be prone to violence.

- *Communities have established closer liaisons between police departments and schools.

- *State governments have established school-safety centers to coordinate efforts and share ideas among all schools under their jurisdiction.

- *The federal government has pumped money into security measures. Mr. Clinton just announced \$ 120 million in new federal grants to increase police protection of schools.

- *Gun control has been pushed front and center. Though efforts to strengthen laws at the federal level have flagged, some states are pushing forward. The gun-control plan recently proposed by Gov. George Pataki of New York, for example, is groundbreaking.

The list could go on. But action in halls of government or schools, though useful, may be far less important than a shift of attitude in the relationships between students, between teachers and students, and - perhaps most important - between students and parents.

The overriding need is to open the thinking of young people to constructive self-examination and a capacity to care for others. That's how moral voids like those that seemed to envelop the school shooters can be filled. That's how negative influences, such as violent entertainment media, are neutralized. How to accomplish this?

A vice principal at North High School in Naperville, Ill. (see story on page 1) wants to focus fresh attention on the kids in the "middle" - not the outstanding students, or the ones on the brink of failures - but those who may just be getting by, and may be feeling no one cares. Just a bit of positive attention from a teacher, or well-motivated peers, can make a big difference.

In some communities, like Manatee County, Fla., teen clubs have been formed to encourage volunteer work helping the needy. When youngsters are given opportunities to serve others, they often respond enthusiastically, and learn key moral lessons in the bargain.

Religion and spiritual teaching and example build moral sensibility and regard for others. One of the darkest sides of the Columbine tragedy was the young gunmen's scorn toward those who professed a belief in God. That underscores the need for all spiritual seekers to deepen their concern for youth and their understanding of the power of love over hate.

What's clearly not needed is a climate of fear where every youngster who dresses strangely, or writes about dark themes, or seems attracted to violent imagery is regarded with suspicion. All children require respect and genuine interest, based on their innate intelligence and capacity to grow.

Columbine must serve as a continuing wake-up call to build better communities that embrace the troubled youth among us. That would be the best memorial to the students who fell there.

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 19, 2000

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Example: House of Representatives

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Los Angeles Times

April 20, 2000, Thursday, Home Edition

SECTION: Southern California Living; Part E; Page 6; View Desk

LENGTH: 233 words

HEADLINE: SECTION GEE! ADVICE, HUMOR, COMICS, HOROSCOPE, KIDS;
LAUGH LINES

BODY:

Forgive and Forget: "Hillary Clinton recently spent a couple of days as a principal at a New York area high school. It would be great having Hillary as your principal. If you get caught cheating, she'd forgive you." (Jay Leno)

A Little Guest Work: "Next month . . . President Clinton and the first lady will hold a **White House conference** on raising **teenagers**. President Clinton hopes to come away from this event with a greater awareness of **teenagers'** needs . . . and a few phone numbers." (Colin Quinn)

Unable to Deliver: "Elian's Miami family says they would have sent him back to Cuba by now, but for some reason their FedEx guy has stopped coming to the house." (Craig Kilborn)

Barely News: "Darva Conger (the bride from 'Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?') might pose nude in Playboy. How sad is that going to be for her ex, Rick Rockwell? . . . 'Hey, Rick, how did your wife look naked?' . . . 'I don't know.' . . . 'Well, here, look at Page 139!' " (Andrew Wisot)

In the Know: "George W. Bush told voters he believes students ought to be tested on what they know before they get promoted. After this speech, he got a phone call from Yale. They're sending him back to the third grade." (Argus Hamilton)

Got a joke? Send it to Laugh Lines by fax, (213) 237-0732, or mail, Southern California Living, Los Angeles Times, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles, CA 90053.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: April 20, 2000

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The Patriot Ledger (Quincy, MA)

April 17, 2000 Monday ROP Edition

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 03

LENGTH: 210 words

HEADLINE: Clinton aims millions at youth violence solutions

BODY:

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Marking the first anniversary of the shooting deaths at Columbine High School, President Clinton announced \$ 120 million in federal grants to place more police officers in schools and finance programs meant to help even the youngest children cope with their problems.

"We must not fail our children; our future depends on it," the president said Saturday during his weekly radio address.

Clinton announced that on May 2 he and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will host a **White House Conference** on **teenagers** to "talk through the challenges of raising responsible children."

Parents, teens, teachers, youth workers and others will discuss research that indicates the preteen years establish lifelong patterns of behavior. Other subjects will include the risks, challenges and anxieties faced by young people and how to avoid and deal with them.

Republican critics called the federal government a clumsy middleman in the battle to solve problems that should be addressed locally. Republican skeptics question the relevance of the teen conference would accomplish anything, accuse Clinton of ignoring media violence, and said he should support severe jail sentences for anyone carrying a firearm in a violent or drug-related crime.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 21, 2000

FOCUSTM

Search: General News;White House w/3 conference and teenagers

To narrow this search, please enter a word or phrase:

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Example: House of Representatives

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View Related Topics

April 21, 2000, Friday ,THIRD EDITION

SECTION: NATIONAL/FOREIGN; Pg. A1

LENGTH: 1311 words

HEADLINE: RESEARCHERS WORRYING AS TEENS GROW UP ONLINE

BYLINE: By Patricia Wen, Globe Staff

BODY:

Teens don't understand the big fuss. As the first generation to grow up in a wired world, they hardly know a time when computers weren't around, and they leap at the chance to spend hours online, chatting with friends. So what?

But researchers nationwide are increasingly concerned that, as cyberspace replaces the pizza parlor as the local hangout, adolescents are becoming more isolated, less adept at interpersonal relationships, and perhaps numb to the small - and big - deceptions that are so much a part of the e-mail world. From Massachusetts Institute of Technology to the Internet Addiction Center at McLean Hospital in Belmont, researchers are asking just how the futures of **teenagers** are changed when so many of them are spending an hour or two on the Internet each day, replacing face-to-face contact with virtual reality.

"We're not only looking at what the computer can do for us, but what are they doing to us," said Sherry Turkle, an MIT sociologist who has secured start-up funding for a Center for Technology and Identity. "It's on so many people's minds."

Turkle's center will study, among other things, how today's teens are affected by growing up with interactive computer technology. She wants to know how a teen's sense of self and values may be altered in a world where personal connections and the creation of new identities can be limitless.

Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh is beginning a study on the long-term effect on **teenagers** when the computer becomes a central part of their social lives. Social psychologist Robert Kraut said he's concerned about the "opportunity costs" of so much online time for youths.

Kraut found that teens who used computers, even just a few hours a week, showed increased signs of loneliness and social isolation. In his 1998 study of 100 Pittsburgh families that use the Internet, Kraut said these teens reported having fewer friends to hang around with, possibly because their computer time replaced hours they would have spent with others.

"Chatting online may be better than watching television, but it's worse than hanging out with real friends," he said.

The interest in cyber-chatting teens goes beyond academia. Next month, a **White House conference** on **teenagers** is sponsoring a session on teens and online behavior, including warnings about cyber-stalkers and other predators.

But today's teens don't see anything strange in the fact that the computer screen occupies a central place in their social lives. Just as their parents' generation quickly adjusted to microwave ovens and touch-tone phones, so have today's teens to personal computers.

Since 1989, when America Online burst onto the scene with chat rooms and instant-messenger systems, teens flocked to them by the millions. Traffic soared in the mid-1990s when AOL developed a "buddy

list" for the instant-messenger system, enabling teens to know when friends were online, and then start a conversation. If all the buddies wanted to e-mail at once, they could enter their own chat room.

Teenage use of computers grew even more over the last two years, thanks to the steep drop in prices of personal computers. About 40 percent of US households now have a computer, and nearly 70 percent with incomes more than \$50,000 have them, according to the Yankee Group, a Boston-based technology research firm.

Not surprisingly, AOL reports a spike in instant-messenger traffic in the mid-afternoon, just after school lets out. Teens say it's little different than the rush at McDonald's after 2 p.m. as adolescents look for ways to unwind.

"School is stressful and busy. There's almost no time to just hang out," said Parker Rice, 17, of Newton South High School. "Talking online is just catch-up time."

Many teens acknowledge there's an unreal quality to their cyberspace communication, including their odd shorthand terms, such as POS (parent over shoulder) or LOL (laughing out loud). Psychologists see this code as part of the exclusive shared language that **teenagers** love.

When it comes to e-mail exchanges, teens also show a remarkable tolerance for each other's fudges or deceptions. Nor are they surprised when a mere acquaintance unloads a personal secret through e-mail. Nobody seems to expect the online world to be the same as the real world.

While waiting outside school recently, Rice recalled a timid boy in class who recently got up the nerve to send her an e-mail. At the end, he issued an uncharacteristically macho send-off, "Later, Babe."

"He'd never say that to me face to face in school," said Rice, more amused than annoyed. "Sometimes people try to seem more self-confident online."

And consider the fact that Jonathon Reis, 14, of Somerville, didn't seem the least bit put off when a girl who had described herself online as slender turned out to be quite heavy. "I know it's likely they'll say they look better than they are," he said while shopping at the CambridgeSide Galleria.

Teens say they also appreciate the ability to edit what they say online, or take the time to think about a response. As cowardly as it may seem, some teens admit that asking someone for a date, or breaking up, can be easier in message form.

But they insist there's no harm intended, and cyberspace has become just another medium - like the telephone - in the often-clumsy, experimental world of adolescence.

Echoing the view of these youths, Turkle, an MIT specialist in the computer's impact on human behavior, sees cyberspace as the new electronic "playspace" for adolescents, an escape from the pressure of everyday life.

While she worries about some safety issues, Turkle said the anonymity and distance of cyberspace allow young people to try out new identities. For instance, an artistic boy can admit to an interest in fashion or an awkward girl can reach out to some new friends with little fear of rejection. Shaping their own identities and forming strong peer groups are among the most central themes of adolescence, she said.

"The Web is the location where much of the work of adolescence is being done these days," said Turkle.

But other researchers don't think everything is so benign, worrying that some teens will mistake the "weak social ties" so easily found among e-mail buddies for genuine friendship.

"These are not the kind of relationships that will sustain you if you have a personal crisis or a death in the family," said Harry Waxman, a psychologist and chair of the Project on the Internet and Human

Behavior at Harvard Medical School.

Waxman and others worry about raising a generation of teens who, as adults, would rather solve a dispute through e-mail than in person. In some ways, the Internet exacerbates the trend toward isolation and away from community that Harvard government professor Robert Putnam has described as "bowling alone."

Beyond the issue of social isolation, a small group of researchers speculates that the developing neural connections in the brains of teens could be affected by such intense involvement with the computer screen.

"If you restrict your experience to staring in front of the screen, you may be short-changing your brain," said Dr. Martin Teicher, head of developmental biopsychiatry at McLean Hospital.

In fact, McLean Hospital has already set up an Internet Addiction Center for teens as well as adults who fear computers are harming them psychologically.

Maressa Hecht Orzack, its coordinator, said she gets many teenage patients, often youngsters who are socially marginalized or among the "bright and bored." She's eager for more research to be done on the impact of online life on teens, saying the good and bad of the medium is not yet fully known.

"These young people may be losing connections to real objects," she said. SIDEBAR THE GROWTH OF INSTANT E-MAIL SEE MICROFILM FOR CHART DATA GLOBE STAFF GRAPHIC

GRAPHIC: CHART

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 21, 2000

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Search: General News;White House w/3 conference and teenagers

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USA TODAY

April 21, 2000, Friday through Sunday, FIRST EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 8A

LENGTH: 912 words

HEADLINE: Candidates go through motions on school violence

BYLINE: Walter Shapiro

DATELINE: FORT LEE, N.J.

BODY:

FORT LEE, N.J. -- The presidential campaign has become so choreographed, it's like an old-time dance studio with footprints outlining the steps taped to the floor.

Thursday was, of course, the first anniversary of the heart-rending massacre at Columbine High, so Al Gore and George W. Bush dedicated the day to expressing their opposition to school violence, which is not exactly an unpopular stand. Gore chose ethnically diverse Fort Lee High School, conveniently located just over the George Washington Bridge from the New York media market, to publicly acknowledge that this is a topic that defies an "easy, glib, magic-bullet answer." (Memo to the vice president: That metaphor needs work.)

Bush, sensitive to the concerns of social conservatives that he is veering too close to the political center, opted to visit an elementary school in Temple, Texas, to highlight his commitment to character-based education programs. "Ultimately, the safety of our children depends on more than laws," the Texas governor declared, using words that reflected his opposition to ambitious gun-control legislation. "It depends on the values that we teach them and the kind of culture that we create."

Both candidates, to their credit, sensed that this was not the moment for partisan invective. Even though a preprinted news release quoted Gore as describing Bush's character-based approach as only "half a solution," the vice president, during an hour-long meeting with students and faculty, refrained from uttering even these mild words of criticism.

The language of both candidates might have been muted, but their we-must-never-forget-Columbine appearances had the unfortunate side effect of contributing to the hysteria that has come to surround the topic of school violence.

A report released by the Justice Policy Institute earlier this month stressed that, even counting the Columbine shootings, violent deaths in schools were down 40% during the 1998-99 academic year compared with the year before, when 43 died.

"Ironically," the report's authors noted, "during a time when youth violence and violence in the schools has been on the decline, parents are becoming more afraid for the safety of their children in schools."

Gore talked about the complexities surrounding school violence for 45 minutes before he got around to ruefully admitting the truth. "Schools remain some of the safest places in our society," he belatedly declared, "and school violence has been trending down."

Why is there such a gap between perceptions and reality? The press and TV news deserve some of the blame for inflaming parental fears each time they produce a tear-stained Columbine retrospective. The murder rampage in an affluent Colorado high school has become this era's version of the Challenger disaster, a tragedy replayed so often that we cannot avoid becoming numb to its horrors.

At a time when parents with children at home -- or "working families," as Gore loves to call them -- are defined as a key voting bloc, politicians cannot resist playing to their worst fears. It was not coincidental that the Clinton press office chose the Columbine anniversary to announce an upcoming **White House conference on teenagers** called "Raising Responsible and Resourceful Youth." In Fort Lee, Gore permitted himself a mawkish moment when he confided that one of the parents of a slain Columbine student had whispered to him, "Promise me that these children have not died in vain."

The vice president is, to be sure, a complex figure. In the space of a single answer to a single voter question, he can adopt four or five political personas, some of which are beguiling and others are off-putting. So it was in Fort Lee when a questioner, who identified himself as something called a "substance-awareness coordinator," asked why the government had reduced federal grant money for "at-risk youth."

Gore began his response by saying that "President Clinton and I included it in the budget." (Note the subtle reference to the vice president's seemingly co-equal role in the administration.) But, Gore explained, congressional Republicans needed money for their "huge, risky tax plan." (It never hurts to drive home the partisan message.) So, he said, the Republicans "tried to cut back on everything they could."

But then, in an artful rhetorical flourish, Gore turned familiar GOP rhetoric about tax cuts on its head. "They say, 'It's your money.'"

"Yes, it is. But it's also your children." That was the vice president's transition into a thoughtful aside on the way that ill-conceived congressional budget cuts can lead to the failure to promptly diagnose mental illness among the young. Now, at long last, came the moment for Gore's carefully phrased campaign promise: "I'm in favor of a robust increase in funds for fighting substance abuse." (A challenge for Republicans: Figure out exactly how much money "a robust increase in funds" represents.)

Sometimes the most revealing moments in a presidential campaign are the quiet days like Thursday, when there are few headlines to be won and few voters to be swayed. By bowing to the irresistible impulse to use Columbine as a campaign prop, both Gore and Bush demonstrated the obvious truth that they are hard-core politicians. But by speaking softly and avoiding any tawdry or overly partisan stunts, they also provided a glimpse of the substance beneath their political veneers. All in all, it wasn't a half-bad day.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 21, 2000

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Subject: WIRE STORIES -- WH Teen Conference

BC-clinton-parents

Clinton Bans Discrimination Against Parents in Federal Jobs ^By Richard Keil

^c.2000 Bloomberg News

Washington, May 2 (Bloomberg) -- President Bill Clinton signed an executive order today barring federal agencies from discriminating against working parents in hiring and promotion.

``Believe it or not, there are still some employers who are reluctant to hire or to promote employees who have children at home,' Clinton said. ``The goal of this order simply says, 'No glass ceiling for parents.' The job they're doing at home is more important anyway, and if they can do your job you ought not to stop them.'"

The order applies only to the federal workplace; changes in employment law that would apply to private companies would require congressional approval.

Clinton announced the move at a White House conference on teenagers; the president first proposed the change in employment law during his 1999 State of the Union address.

The order bars discrimination against parents in all aspects of federal employment, including recruitment, referral, hiring, promotions, training and discharge. The goal of the move is to prevent employers from assuming that those caring for children wouldn't have the time or commitment to fulfill job responsibilities.

It is based on legislation introduced last year by Senator Edward Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat, and Senator Christopher Dodd, a Democrat from Connecticut; the bill didn't pass.

Clinton administration officials said the order wouldn't interfere with an employer's ability to select workers. --Richard Keil in Washington (202) 624-1884, or dkeilbloomberg.net /rdm /wfs -0- (BN) May/02/2000 13:47

Clintons convene White House conference on teens

WASHINGTON, May 2 (UPI) -- President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton convened a White House conference on teens Tuesday, releasing reports showing some good news about youth involvement with drugs and smoking but significant problems remaining, including a lack of quality time with parents. Clinton said, "Virtually everybody has some trouble balancing family and work."

^PM-White House-Teens, 1st Ld-Writethru, a0415,590

^White House holds conference on raising teens

^Eds: LEADS with 9 new grafts with Clinton executive order, quotes; picks up graf 5 pvs, 'Adults usually...'

^By DEB RIECHMANN= ^Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) President Clinton today ordered a ban on a ``glass ceiling for parents'' in the federal work force, meaning the government cannot discriminate against parents out of concern that home life will intrude on the workplace.

``Believe it or not, there are still some employers who are reluctant to hire or promote employees who have children at home,'' Clinton said at the start of a White House conference on helping families raise teen-agers.

``The job they are doing at home is more important,'' Clinton said, citing studies and a new poll that, he said, confirm that communication and family togetherness are crucial factors in raising responsible, happy teen-agers.

Clinton's executive order applies only to federal workers and does not require approval from Congress.

``Parents are still the most important adults in their teen-agers' lives,'' first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said before introducing her ``co-parent'' in raising daughter Chelsea, 20, who left home three years ago for college.

Mrs. Clinton described occasional frustrations as she and the president dealt with Chelsea's teen-age ambivalence toward them. ``You want to hang around just in case they'll deign to say something to you,'' she said to laughter.

But she said the 30 minutes or so the three of them tried to spend having at least one meal together each day was her favorite part of the day.

Parents, teens, teachers, youth workers and others were invited to the daylong conference to discuss ways to raise and mentor responsible and resourceful youth.

Mrs. Clinton moderated two morning sessions, including one on what parents and communities can do to help teens succeed. Afternoon panel discussions were to address what can be done to make it easier for parents to spend time together, media's effect on youth and parenting and what parents, communities and young people can do to avoid risky behavior.

``Adults usually do not listen to young people and they don't make it their business to help them implement their goals,'' said panelist Dorothy Stoneman, founder of the Boston-based YouthBuild USA, which teaches low-income young people construction skills by building affordable housing in their communities. ``What happens when you listen, young people get engaged and connected and they feel better about themselves.''

The conference also was highlighting recent brain research that says the preteen years are as important in setting patterns for adult behavior as the first three years of life.

Scientists had believed that brain development slowed after the first few years of life that the brain was essentially organized by the time a child enters the first grade. The research, first published late last year and then in the March issue of the journal Nature, showed that in teen-agers up to age 15, there are peak growth rates in areas of the brain associated with language and associative thinking.

``Sometimes we give up on kids early and feel that they are already doomed for certain fates, but from the biological perspective there are still lots and lots of opportunities for change during the teen years,' ' said Dr. Jay Giedd, a National Institute of Mental Health child psychiatrist who worked on the research.

^ =

On the Net:

The White House: <http://www.whitehouse.gov>

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