



Building our future by supporting our youth

# Our Community's Children

July 2008

## Afterschool Programs in Every Elementary & Middle

In Mayor George K. Heartwell's 2008 State of the City Address, he proclaimed, "We will have an afterschool program in every public school! That's my commitment!"

A short four months after this speech, all Grand Rapids Public Schools' (GRPS) grants submitted for the State of Michigan 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Fund were awarded \$25 million over the next five years. This translates to 10 new afterschool sites! Grand Rapids also received a \$352,000 federal earmark to cover two additional sites. All 36 GRPS elementary and middle schools will have a quality afterschool program in the fall and throughout the summer.



"This has tremendous implications for our children, youth, families, and community! Afterschool programs are the necessary link before and after the school bell rings to help our children succeed in school and in life," said Mayor Heartwell.

The GRPS afterschool program called The LOOP was designed as a model program by the Expanded Learning Opportunities Network, a community collaborative of 100 partners who work to ensure all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. The LOOP is managed by the GRPS Office of Extended Learning.

## Enjoy Summer Safely

Summer is in full swing and our city's children and youth are enjoying all the fun and excitement the season brings. Simultaneously, parents must be aware of some critical safety tips to help avoid accidental injuries, some of which are:

- Children need helmets when biking. Helmets sit on top of the head in a level position.
- Children should not light fireworks and be taught to stop, drop and roll in case of a fire.
- Children should use playgrounds with rubber, wood, mulch or sand surfaces.
- Children should be indoors when the lawn is being mowed.
- Children should never swim alone and only with adult supervision.

For more safety tips go to [www.grandrapidssafekids.org](http://www.grandrapidssafekids.org).

### **New Child Booster Seat Law**

*As of July 1, 2008, Michigan law requires children ages 4 to 8 or 4'9", whichever comes first, to be in a booster seat in automobiles. Log onto [www.michigansafekids.org](http://www.michigansafekids.org) for more info.*



Photo of the Month

## ***Kids Count in Michigan Releases New Report***

The 2008 Kids Count Data Book, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which tracks state-by-state efforts on the status of children, has ranked Michigan 27th among states (#1 being the best) in child well-being based upon ten areas during the years of 2000 to 2005. Those areas are: percentage of low-birth weight babies, infant mortality rate, child death rate, teen death rate, teen birth rate, high school dropout rate, percentage of teens not attending school and not working, percentage of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, percentage of children in poverty, and percentage of children in single-parent families.

Some of the findings show that Michigan youth are more likely to be held in custody than youth in most other states. In addition minorities are locked up at triple the rate of their Caucasian peers. The most dramatic trend was a 29% increase in the number of children living in poverty - that translates into 18% of children in Michigan live in poverty, which ranks Michigan 30th among the other states. The good news is that there was a 20% decline in the rate of teen births, a 40% decrease in the percentage of teens who are high school dropouts, and a decrease in the rate of teen deaths.

## ***Parental Influence Factor In Alcohol Consumption Among Teens***

In 2006, the Making Sobriety Attractive Project (MSA) surveyed over 2,000 high school students that attend suburban schools. The results indicate that the more parents talked to their teens about not drinking alcohol, the fewer times teens drank. In addition, 98% of surveyed parents said they would always welcome a call from other parents to ensure that there would be adult supervision at parties and that no alcohol was being served in their home.

Teen drinking has many consequences. According to the American Medical Association, teen drinking causes learning and memory impairments which may have long-term effects and be irreversible. In addition, teens that drink are more likely to get into fights, experience sexual aggression, drive under the influence or ride with a driver who has been drinking.

*The MSA Project is sponsored by the Kent County SA Prevention Leadership Coalition and Implemented by the ALERT Labs Group (Alcohol [and other drugs] Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training) at GVSU. Information in this article was taken from the MSA Newsletter.*

### **In Our Words**



**"Love is not just another word in the dictionary. It is not a word that you use lightly. When you say it, mean it and when you get it, don't let go!"**

**-Cheyenne Doss,  
8th-grader  
Ridge Park Charter  
Academy  
Grand Rapids  
Youth Commission**



Our Community's Children is a public/private partnership of the City of Grand Rapids, the Grand Rapids Public Schools, and the community.



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