

# METRO

## Oregonians pour out ideas for helping children thrive

■ Summits on youth violence and early childhood development unite legislators, social workers and families with myriad proposals

By KATE TAYLOR

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More than 500 child advocates Wednesday packed rooms at the Oregon Conference Center to voice their grief and concerns about the Springfield shooting and to propose changes ranging from returning prayer to classrooms to outlawing guns.

Legislators, social workers and families delivered their ideas during two separate summits: one focusing on helping the youngest Oregonians develop healthy brains by giving more support to their families; the other exploring ways to fight youth violence.

The result was a mix of questions and statements that fused into a central plea: That those who care for children do whatever they can to bring about legislative change and financing that will help children and families in need.

"There are some problems that you can solve by throwing money at them," Linda Nelson, of the Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children, said in the summit on early childhood development, the Oregon's Child Policy Summit. Businesses must become more involved in helping children in need, she added.

House Minority Leader Kitty Piercy, D-Eugene, vowed that during the next legislative session, she will advocate hard for more support for early childhood development. She said that issues

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## Children: Advocates must 'get there early and stay late'

■ Continued from Page B1 regarding families and children often are shunted and of "literally negative importance in the Legislature."

"If we do one thing this session, let's do something about that."

Pat Sheppard, president of the Oregon Association of Child Care Directors, listed a need for more highly skilled child care workers, better pay for child care workers and teachers, more site inspection and more certification.

According to a 1996 study, the most current data available, 66,300 of Oregon's children were in child-

care centers and 47,200 were in family child care, where inspections are not routine.

Anita McClanahan, coordinator of Early Childhood Education in the Oregon Department of Education, said the United States does more research on child care and development than other countries but uses it very little.

"We have this incredible body of research and we totally ignore it."

In Oregon, an estimated 15,300 low-income 3- and 4-year-olds need Head Start but can't get it, according to experts on early childhood.

Many child advocates spoke of the

importance of not talking just to each other, but speaking in terms the public can understand, describing the importance of support for early childhood development and working against violence.

In the summit on youth and violence, a one-time gun-packing Milwaukie High School student stood up and said child advocates are too scattered and need to unite.

"There are youth pastors willing to pour their lives into helping these kids," said David Resinger, now a 23-year-old youth pastor at New Beginnings Christian Center in Northeast Portland.

But those who want to make changes that will help children make good choices in life will have to "get there early and stay late," said state Sen. Avel Gordly, D-Portland. She watched a man wounded by a gunshot stagger across the street from her Northeast Portland home Tuesday night. She spoke during the summit, arranged by Children First for Oregon.

If Oregonians don't stop "leaving children to raise themselves," said Kay Toran, director of the State Office for Services to Children and Families, "then we can predict more problems."