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Is Oregon a good place to raise kids?

Oregon may or may not be below average as a place to raise children. A national survey by the Children's Rights Council ranked Oregon as 40th among states, based on several benchmarks to measure healthy children and families.

Some Oregonians have objected to the ranking, saying the measurements were not consistent among states. Perhaps Oregon hasn't slipped as far as the survey indicates, but even our state's own statistics show a clear, downward trend for children. One factor contributing to the decline is the state's disinvestment in schools during the 1990s. As programs are cut, children suffer.

But money isn't the only thing to consider. In today's East Oregonian, several local residents discuss the state of children in our community. During a discussion this week, these folks were

quickly able to identify the problems children face: drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, a lack of values and the pervasive, negative impact of some forms of electronic media. When they talked about solutions, government programs were part of the answer, but group members also recognized the need for personal responsibility. Children, they said, need to feel the consequences of their actions. Neighbors must be willing to intervene when they see inappropriate behavior, and parents must become better role models.

Those sound like simplistic answers, but they require a great deal of hard work. Certainly, our state government could do more to help Oregon's children, especially if the dollars are directed toward practical, local programs. But the biggest change in our children will come if we make changes within our own hearts.

Editorials on this page are written by Richard Hensley, editor and Mark Garber, publisher.