

DAILY ASTORIAN

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Save the children

The welfare of children and old people are measures by which a nation should be judged. Thanks to Medicare, America's oldest citizens have lives that are measurably better than they were 40 years ago. **But children still languish.**

The extent of the lag in Oregon's child welfare is depicted in the annual report of Children First for Oregon. That non-partisan, nonprofit group has given Oregon a "C" in child well-being. The group noted that "Research shows that Oregon has steadily decreased or shown no improvement since 1990 in the areas of childhood poverty, hunger, teen dropouts and juvenile arrests."

Drawing from a wide array of data sources, Children First for Oregon notes that 16 percent of

Oregon children under 18 live in poverty. The state's 2000 Benchmark for all Oregonians is 11 percent. They also note that 10 percent of Oregon children under 18 lack health insurance, while the goal is 9 percent for all Oregonians.

There has been progress. For instance, 64 percent of eighth grade students meet or exceed state reading standards, while the 2000 benchmark is 63 percent.

If you desire a copy of the report card, call (503) 236-9754 or e-mail your request to office@cffo.org.

While this is not undiluted bad news, there is enough in this report card to remind us how miserable life is for a fairly broad swath of the youngest Oregonians.