

Elsewhere in Oregon

5038

Oregon kids see good beginnings

SALEM — Children are getting off to a good start in Oregon, but are struggling in later years, according to a new national survey.

The annual "Kids Count" report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that Oregon ranked best in the nation for the rate of low-birthweight babies and third best for infant mortality rate.

But Oregon had one of the biggest jumps in the high school dropout rate in the nation, rising from 8 percent in 1990 to 13 percent in 1998, and a 43 percent rise in the share of teens not in school and not working, during the same period, compared with a 20-percent decrease nationally.

"We do have some significant challenges," said Marie Hoeven, executive director of Children First for Oregon, a Portland-based group.

In other rankings, Oregon was 19th nationally for the number of poor children; 19th in its teen death rate; 22nd for single-parent families, 25th in teen birth rate; 37th for teens not working or going to school; 42nd for children living with un-

employed parents, 45th for high school dropouts.

The state's overall rank was No. 20.

Weyerhaeuser, strikers to talk

COOS BAY — Strikers and Weyerhaeuser Co. have agreed to return to the bargaining table this week for the first talks since 1,400 union members walked off their jobs May 8.

A federal mediator has scheduled negotiations today in Portland for the Federal Way, Wash.-based timber company and the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers.

Steve Nitschke, a negotiator who's also the president of Local 1000 in North Bend, said the union has been ready to meet since last week and he's not sure what prompted today's return to the bargaining table.

The strike idled four of the company's paper mills in Oregon and Washington, including the company's containerboard plant in North Bend. Since then, Weyerhaeuser has been able to restart its mill in Springfield. The North Bend "mill will not start in the near future," according to the company.

—From wire reports

The Bend Bulletin