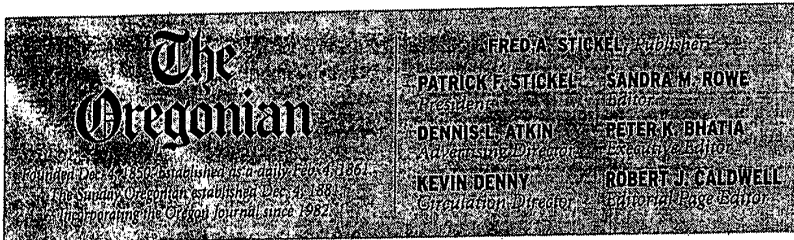


# Editorial

**The Oregonian**  
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## The shortest lives

*In 2002, the Oregon child casualty rate is mounting, forcing us to look at small bodies — and ourselves*

**F**our murdered children on a hillside in McMinnville. Three small bodies of Christian Longo's children pulled out of water near the coast.

Two 13-year-old girls missing from the same apartment complex in Oregon City; police think their disappearance involved someone they knew.

A 14-year-old girl murdered on her way to school in Northeast Portland.

A boy shot dead sitting in his house in Southeast Portland.

Anyone looking at the recent news might think that somehow somebody had declared an open season on Oregon's children. The latest horrific example surfaced Friday, when Yamhill County sheriff's deputies discovered 15-year-old Clayton Bryant, 13-year-old Ethan, 9-year-old Ashley and 8-year-old Alyssa shot to death in their beds, with the bodies of their parents elsewhere in the house. Police have concluded the father, Robert Bryant, killed the family and himself.

The deaths all come out of different circumstances, but so does every act of violence against Oregon children — of which there are a staggering number. In 2000, the year of the most recent data, 10,186 Oregon children were victims of abuse, and 21 died of abuse or neglect.

Which doesn't even count the children who are casualties of an adult taste

for drugs or violence.

At times of adult anger and frustration — from drugs or viciousness or a bad economy — children are terribly endangered. "They're in the home," says Marie Høeven, executive director of Children First for Oregon. "They're in close proximity. They're living in an environment of their parents' frustration."

And the results spill across the state, even if they fall short of the front pages.

"We just see kid after kid," says Chris Krenk of Alberta Kerr Centers, "who's been hurt by parents or a significant relative." Or by another adult they know, or thought they did.

"There's no question that there's tremendous vulnerability of kids," says Jay Bloom, CEO of Morrison Center for Child Family Services. "We like to think we're a child-centered society, but it's not there."

Oregonians react in rightful horror to juvenile violence, and complain about the media and video games and badly raised children. But here, as in so many other places, the greatest danger facing children is from adults.

That is an outrage. We will make a dent in the numbers only when we start to take responsibility for them, when child protection becomes a priority.

In other words, when Oregon adults act like grown-ups.