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EDITORIAL

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Study of kids at risk calls for local action

It's no secret we have some serious challenges here in Douglas County. The beauty of the countryside cannot mask the underlying problems suffered by many of its residents.

After being battered for so many years with economic downturns, the problems are formidable. However, these challenges can be met by resolute and determined people.

Fortunately, what the county does have going for it is incredible, proven resolve. Far from giving up and admitting defeat, the county has struggled back, attracted some new jobs and businesses and has been holding its own.

Sometimes, it's easier to solve a big problem by whittling it down to smaller ones and recording some victories.

We might first want to step up the battle for the county's children at risk.

It's not easy being a kid here. In the annual report from Children First for Oregon, this area fared worse than the state average in 12 of 16 criteria.

The results are alarming. They are no surprise to those who work in social services and law enforcement. They should be a heck of an eye-opener to the general public.

For example, the number of suicide attempts by area teens was 56 percent higher than the state overall average. Child abuse reports were 23 percent worse.

As with any survey, the results from the non-profit, nonpartisan group can be misleading and should be reviewed with caution. For example, this county showed a high infant mortality rate. However, the total number of deaths was just 10. One less would have brought us close to the state average.

Taken as a whole, however, the county numbers should concern us all. Social service agencies are scrambling to provide services to those most in need.