

## Children First for Oregon Releases Report on Oregon's Kids

**C**hildren First for Oregon, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group advocating for Oregon's children and families, recently released its *2003 County Data Book*. The 68-page county-by-county compilation contains a variety of statistics on the status of Oregon's children.

"With more than one in three Oregon children living in or near poverty, we know there's work to be done," says Marie Hoeven, Children First's executive director. "Smart public and private investments that promote family financial stability will be good for Oregon's children and the state's economy."

Here are some of the

most significant findings contained in this year's report:

- Thirty-seven percent of Oregon children, more than 321,000 in all, live in poverty or in financially vulnerable households.
- More than 80,000 Oregon children have no health insurance, despite the existence of the Oregon Health Plan.
- Between 1994 and 2002, the cost of childcare increased significantly, with family care and daycare center costs increasing 34 percent and 37 percent, respectively. Consequently, almost two-thirds of low-income Oregon families cannot find affordable childcare.
- Housing costs have also soared in Oregon. More than

three-fourths of low-income rental households cannot find affordable housing.

- Nearly 25 percent of Oregon children live in "food insecure" households, where they're unsure where their next meal will come from.

According to Children First, the worsening trend of Oregon children living in financially unstable environments can be reversed through implementing proven policies and programs that help low-income working families break the cycle of poverty. The report makes specific recommendations on how to make quality childcare more affordable, how to expand access to needed health care and how to

strengthen earned income tax credits.

Children First also urges all Oregonians to educate themselves about how Oregon pays for needed public services by tapping into the resources of Citizens for Oregon's Future, a coalition of concerned groups that provides training and information on Oregon's taxing and budget process. Visit [www.fororegon.org](http://www.fororegon.org) for more information.

The *2003 County Data Book* and more information on Children First for Oregon can be found at [www.childrenfirstfororegon.org](http://www.childrenfirstfororegon.org). Children First can be reached by phone at 503-236-9754.

— Marie Sherlock