

August 16, 2007

## Pulling plug on Head Start a bad move

The Beaverton School District is poised to pull the plug on their school-based Head Start programs. This is a wrong move for multiple reasons.

Superintendent Jerry Colonna, in leadership of our district and as president of the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, has testified in Salem on behalf of early education. In fact, the Beaverton School District's No. 1 legislative priority this past session was to fund pre-kindergarten.

In 1998 Head Start negotiated a 15-year contract that allowed their students access to seven classrooms in exchange for federal money that allowed the district to purchase seven portables. Spending \$200,000 to \$225,000 to break the contract is a cheap shot.

Portables have been a temporary fix for unbridled growth in the BSD. New developments north of Highway 26 in unincorporated Washington County typify demographics of suburban Washington County, which (according to Head Start statistics) boasts a 12.7 percent poverty rate — the lowest of all Oregon counties.

But another Head Start statistic is far more concerning. Only 35.7 percent of eligible children receive Head Start services in Washington County. Our county claims the highest percentage of unserved children in Oregon.

Funding from this past legislative session allows a significant expansion to Head Start. As Head Start is predominantly school-based in Washington County, breaking Head Start's contract would be devastating to poor kids.

A school-based program is particularly beneficial when pre-schoolers transition to their neighborhood school. That is why the decision to move Head Start from Vose Elementary (82 percent free and reduced) to overcrowded Jacob Wismer Elementary (8 percent free and reduced) is particularly cruel. A Head Start portable may ironically allow art classes for Jacob Wismer children.

Legislators referred a ballot measure to eliminate the double majority necessary to pass school bonds. Our school district should not be narrow-viewed and shortsighted. Head Start deserves the full length of their contract to negotiate for alternative sites within the community.

KRIS ALMAN  
Raleigh Hills

## Mexican immigration system needs fixing

I am writing to share my opinion on the illegal immigration debate.

I recently went to Tijuana on a mission trip with my church and was able to see firsthand the unbearable living conditions in the city.

There are poor sewer systems, families living on salaries of \$50 a week, homes that are falling apart, and an education system that hardly educates. The differences between home and when I crossed the border were mind-boggling.

It became clear to me why Mexicans go to such extreme lengths to migrate to the United States. How many of us

could support their families on their wages or would want to live somewhere that has diapers strewn through the streets?

I hear that over 40 percent of Mexicans say that if given the opportunity, they would move to the U.S. Meanwhile, the U.S. offers an extremely limited number of visas, which are nearly impossible to obtain. The cost to apply for one is frequently too expensive for Mexican families, and the wait, which often is more than 10 years, is too long. The supply of and demand for visas just don't match up.

While we were in Tijuana, we were given the opportunity to visit Casa Del Migrante, a shelter for recently deported Mexicans. One man we met had lived in the U.S. for all but three years of his life when he was deported back to Mexico. He didn't even speak Spanish and had to start a whole new life.

He is not alone. Every day hundreds upon hundreds of Mexicans are deported from the U.S.

It is simply not an option for many Mexicans to come to the U.S. legally with the system we now have. It is small-minded of us to say that they should.

If we assisted Mexicans in improving their living conditions, they would not have the need to migrate to the U.S.

We also need to make a more effective and realistic way for people to move here legally. We could try these things instead of wasting billions on securing the border and hunting down immigrants.

MEGAN MORRIS  
Raleigh Hills

## Letters to the Editor

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