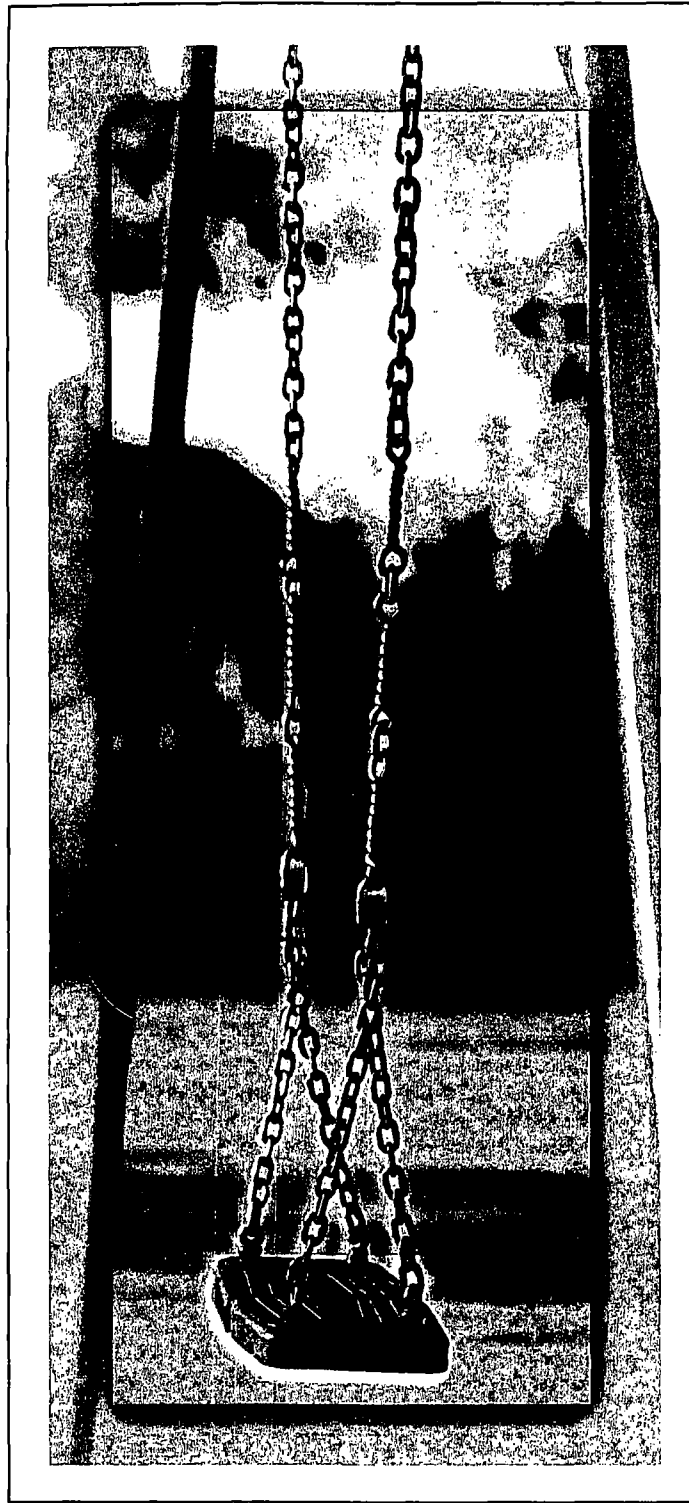

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KIDS NEED A FUTURE, NOT FUNERALS...

Take action now to safeguard your children

Community Violence Prevention Kit

National PTA®

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EDUCATION WEEK

American Education's Newspaper of Record

Volume XVIII, Number 39 • June 9, 1999

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N.J. Plans To End Takeover In Jersey City

Mixed Results Seen After 10 Years

By Kerry A. White

A decade after seizing control of the Jersey City schools because of abysmal test scores and financial and political turmoil, New Jersey state officials unveiled a plan last week for returning the district to local control.

Despite mixed reports on progress since the 1989 takeover under the state's pioneering "academic bankruptcy" law, Commissioner of Education David C. Hespe said the 32,000-student district had shown enough improvement to warrant a transfer back to the local school board. Since the takeover—the first of its kind in the country—the nine-member, locally elected panel has existed merely as an advisory body to the state-appointed superintendent.

"In the past 10 years, the district has shown marked improvement in many areas, including academics," and especially in budgetary and management matters, Mr. Hespe said last week.

Though Jersey City has made some gains, "test scores still fall short of what we want them to be, but our focus has been on improvement," he said. "And by bringing the community into schools, I think we'll see greater gains in student performance."

Continued on Page 11

Partisan Politics Lend New Twist To State Debates

Third in an occasional series.

By Jessica L. Sandham

In the closing hours of the Arizona state legislative session this spring, tempers flared not over what did happen, but rather, what didn't.

Locked in a political standoff, lawmakers allowed the clock to run out on an omnibus bill designed to impose stricter

POWER
The new state role in schools

regulations on the state's expansive 300-school charter system, even though members of both parties agreed at the start of the session that the system needed better safeguards against abuse.

But after months of wrangling over the

Continued on Page 16

ACROSS THE NATION

New Life for Old Playgrounds



Brian Fleming illustrates a science lesson on bubbles for his 3rd grade class at Dennis C. Haley Elementary, one of 16 Boston schools that have converted drab blacktops into places for both play and learning. See Story, Page 6.

More Students Turning Up at the Conference Table

By Linda Jacobson

When Michelle Baker first learned that her son Colin would take part in a parent-teacher conference, she was skeptical.

"I thought, this is going to be a fiasco," she recalled.

Instead, Colin, who was in 1st grade at the time, was able to accurately pinpoint his academic strengths and weaknesses during the conference.

"He had the opportunity to hear his teacher talk about him with him sitting

there," Ms. Baker said. "He was able to communicate and understand better what he was being judged on."

In the Perrysburg, Ohio, school district, where Colin is now in 3rd grade, educators increasingly are coming to the conclusion that the most important person affected by a school conference—the student—should not have to sit at home or wait nervously in the hallway while parents and teachers talk.

Pupils at three of the four elementary schools in the 4,400-student district not only participate in the meetings, they also

lead the conversation.

"It forces the child to be introspective," said Becky Schooley, the principal of Fort Meigs Elementary School in Perrysburg, south of Toledo, where Colin is a student.

While it's difficult to trace the roots of conferences led by or involving students, there are signs that the practice is spreading across the country, said Rick Stiggins, the president of the Assessment Training Institute in Portland, Ore. The institute produces training videos and materials that emphasize daily classroom assess-

Continued on Page 12

Local Funds Playing Larger Roles in Reform

By Kerry A. White

Boston

The Boston Plan for Excellence started out in 1984 with a modest but important mission: to pitch in and help the struggling Boston schools with "mini-grants" for school projects and college scholarships for students.

Money talks, and as the nonprofit organization's endowment grew over time, so too did its ambitions. The group's leaders gradually began to exploit their financial clout and their role as a community arm strongly supported by many of the city's civic and community leaders.

Increasingly, when district administrators and the school board met to consider large-scale reforms, the Boston Plan began asking

for, and receiving, a seat at the table.

Today, backed by nearly \$35 million of grantmaking muscle, the local education fund is an integral—but independent—part of education policymaking in Boston, a "critical friend" that provides a constructive bridge between business, community, and district leadership.

The relationship "has been really constructive," Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant said of the district's experience with the Boston Plan for Excellence. "There's a healthy pushing and prodding" between the two groups, he said.

And it is one of the success stories of the Public Education Network, a Washington-based organization of more than 40 local education funds, or LEFs, around the country,

Continued on Page 10



May 13, 1999

GSD&M

Ms. Neera Tanden
First Lady's Office
Second Floor, West Wing
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear Neera,

It was a pleasure speaking with you today regarding the "Tune In To Your Kids" campaign. Enclosed please find the following for your review:

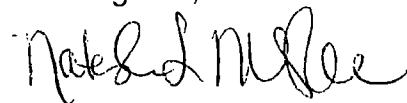
- Report that summarizes the qualitative research we did last fall to develop the campaign
- Strategy brief that was used to develop the creative campaign for the country music artists
- One-page overview of the campaign
- Our tentative timeline

We are extremely flexible in our plan, and would be honored to have the First Lady involved in this important campaign. We realize that her time is very limited and would propose three ideas that could prominently involve her in the campaign:

- Use her name as an endorsement to the campaign (i.e. press releases, interviews)
- Have an event at the White House (or location TBD) where we kick-off the campaign with her and the artists in early September
- Have her attend the CMA Awards and press conference on September 22, 1999 where the campaign will be premiered and "teased" throughout the show.

We are open to input and look forward to discussing these ideas with you in more detail. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please don't hesitate to call me at 512-427-4385 or e-mail natasha_mccree@gsdm.com.

Best regards,



Natasha McRee
Account Supervisor

Ad Council & CMA Tune In To Your Kids Campaign

Objective

To identify and promote a cause that will be relevant and beneficial to families, specifically children through the Ad Council and the Country Music Association

The Main Idea

Tune-in to your kids—Listening to kids can help strengthen families.

Who?

The Country Music Association, the Ad Council, the Rockefeller Foundation, several non-profit charities (i.e. Talking with Kids, the National Fatherhood Initiative, etc.) and YOU!!

Artists already committed to the campaign include: Wynonna, Martina McBride, Vince Gill, Tim McGraw and others.

What?

A broad-reaching public service advertising campaign that will run nationally on TV, radio and outdoor. It will premier at the CMA Awards on September 22, 1999 and will receive an estimated \$25 million in media coverage.

We plan to expand the campaign to include a National Tune In To Your Kids Day that will be supported by a national radio promotion. Our goal is to continually remind parents to improve the communication with their kids through better listening skills.

Why?

Better communication between parents and kids leads to:

- children feeling valued and less susceptible to peer pressure
- children getting another point of view to consider
- can impact children on modern social issues (i.e. gangs, alcohol, etc.)

Country music is a perfect fit because:

- Impacts a large segment of the population
- Perceived as being accessible, "real life" and empathetic.
- Ability to inspire though songs, stories and empathy

Contact: Natasha McRee 512-427-4385

**CMA/ Ad Council Tune In To Your Kids
Tentative Timeline
5/13/1999**

Creative development- April 1-20, 1999

Concept approval- April 21- May 10, 1999

Creative execution (TV, radio, outdoor, etc.)- May 30- July 30, 1999

Press release/conference announcing the campaign- September 8*, 1999

Event to kick-off campaign- September 9/10*, 1999

Campaign premiere @ CMA Awards- September 22, 1999

National Tune In To Your Kids Day- October 16*, 1999

*- Dates still tentative

OUR TIMES: Coto de Caza • Foothill Ranch • Lake Forest • Mission Viejo • Rancho Santa Margarita

ORANGE COUNTY

SECTION B
Tuesday

WWW.LATIMES.COM

OCTOBER 12, 1999

Los Angeles Times

M

What's Troubling Teens? Teachers Hit Road to Learn

By LISA RICHARDSON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The two men have traveled the country going from state to state, town to town, asking children the same question:

"Why do kids kill kids?"

The answer—from rich kids luxuriating in million-dollar suburbs to poor ones surviving in crime-ridden tenements, from New England kids in aluminum-sided colonials to Mennonite kids working on Pennsylvania hog farms—was the same.

"Kids are angry, kids are violent, and kids become killers because parents are doing a lousy job. Not just their own parents, but everyone else's, too."

Compelled by school shooting after school shooting to seek out the roots of youth violence, educators Howard Haas, 49, and Alex Aitcheson, 48, set out last month on a self-styled "Children's Crusade."

Now back from a 50-city trip in which they visited teen centers and public parks, inner-city projects and suburban malls, Haas, of Mission Viejo, and Aitcheson, of Riverside, say they heard the same message again and again, everywhere they stopped.

■ Teens need more time with their parents and more guidance from them.

■ They want their parents to listen to them, to ask their opinions, to set guidelines and require them to adhere to rules. Mothers

Please see VIOLENCE, B4



Howard Haas, right, and Alex Aitcheson are greeted by people in La Mirada during one of their stops in the cross-country trip to find the roots of youth violence.

J. EMILIO FLORES/For The Times

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

VIOLENCE: Pair Visits 50 U.S. Cities in Search for Answers

Continued from B1

many said, are their heroes' fathers—often described as emotionally or physically absent—are not.

Haas, former principal of La Mirada High School, and Aitcheson, a former administrator at Valverde Unified School District in Riverside County, recently returned from their journey and are editing the 80 hours of filmed interviews.

"What we found was there's a desert out there," Haas said. "Kids are just dying to talk and don't have anyone to talk to."

"When we didn't have scheduled interviews, we'd ask what's the toughest street in the city and we'd go there. You'd have 20 or 30 little children come running to us because they have nowhere to play and nothing else to do."

The two men had been discussing teen violence since the school shootings in Pearl, Miss.; West Paducah, Ky.; Jonesboro, Ark.; and Edinboro, Penn. Then on April 20, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris stormed Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., shooting 13 students and themselves.

It was more than Aitcheson and Haas could stand. Both quit their jobs and launched the crusade. Both school districts reserved teaching jobs for them to return to.

In addition to questions about violence, the two asked children: Who are your heroes? Does poverty make someone inclined to be violent? Does media violence influence children? Does easy access to guns create violence? Can government help and does belief in God diminish violence?

Answers varied. A Mennonite girl said, "The snake came and tempted Eve. Eve tempted Adam with an apple and it's gone downhill since."

But often, although many teens mentioned jealousy, anger, over harassment for being different, gangs and peer pressure as contributing causes of violence, a steadfast indictment of parents surfaced in almost every interview.

"Why are kids killing kids? I think in society, parents are the ones supposed to be accused. I think parents are what the problem is," said Francia Maestas, 18, of Glendale, Utah.

Violence is not something you just pick up. You don't get an

urge to kill someone for no reason. It all comes back to the family," said Tara Grove, 17, of Cleveland.

And from a teen in Woodbury, Conn.: "Parents have to instill their values on their kids. How could these Columbine kids have a shotgun in their top drawers? It's ridiculous. Where were the parents?"

Also, from the smallest hamlet of 1,000 to Central Park in New York City, teens said drugs are ever-present in their lives.

"There wasn't a community we visited that didn't have drugs, and the kids didn't think the government could do much about it," Haas said. Many also felt that way about gun control too. "It's so widespread they think guns will be pretty difficult to curb."

One of the pair's greatest fears, however—that children had become inured to violence—was not realized.

"I had thought that maybe kids had become numb, that they just didn't care anymore," Haas said. "The kids aren't numb, but we adults have grown numb."

"We see kids playing outside in a grass field filled with dog manure and glass, and we don't do anything about it."

The greatest jolt for both men was the poverty and crime endured by children in the nation's slums and ghettos.

"I think it has radicalized me about the work that needs to be done in the inner cities," Haas said.

Their hope is that the completed film will be used by educators and elected officials, community groups and agencies working with youths.

The Kiwanis club donated \$10,000 and housed the two in Kiwanis homes along the route. General Motors donated use of a van, and Pacific Bell gave them \$750 worth of gas. But the trip cost about \$60,000 and now the two must defray the bills.

And the project is not over. Haas and Aitcheson saved California interviews for last. After those are completed, their goal is to bring together the teens they interviewed along with their parents for a summit on teen violence.

"I think we need to bring the consciousness back again," Haas said. "My generation is the one that needs to remember. It's time now for people to see we can make a difference. We *have* to make a difference."

Pet of the week:
Speck the Dalmatian has
special needs and needs
a good home. **Page 2**

Accent

Miss Manners:
The use of caller ID
presents special etiquette
challenges. **Page 2**

The Orange County Register • Thursday, Oct. 14, 1999

DEAR ABBY 2 • DOONESBURY 2 • TODAY IN HISTORY 2 • L.M. BOYD 2 • HOBBY CALENDAR 3 • COMICS & GAMES 6-7 • HOROSCOPE 7

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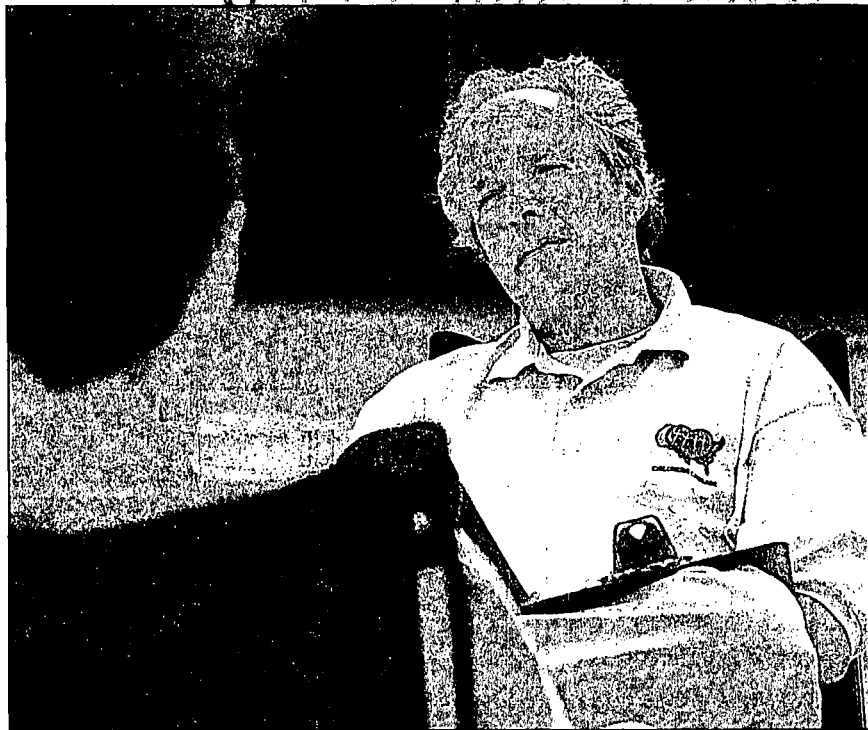
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DYING TO TALK

**TWO EDUCATORS SEARCH FOR
THE ROOTS OF TEEN VIOLENCE**



LENDING AN EAR: Educator Howard Haas listens to Sean Herrera, a freshman at Century High.

**"There are so many people
out there who are dying to
help and no one has told
them how to help."**

-HOWARD HAAS

STORY BY **THERESA WALKER**
PHOTOS BY **DAVID PAUL MORRIS**
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Don't blame it on what they see on TV.
Don't blame it on what they hear in a
song. Don't blame it on what they do
in video games.

That's not why kids are killing kids.
Those might be the scapegoats that adults
finger for the tragedies that have left chil-
dren dead in their schools and on street cor-
ners.

It's just not what Howard
Haas and Alex Aitcheson
heard on their cross-coun-
try journey this past sum-
mer to talk to the experts
that all the other experts
didn't seem to be talking to:
kids.

Kids in the inner cities.
Kids in the suburbs. Kids
on farms.

Kids who live on the
streets. Kids whose par-
ents are afraid to let them
out of the house. Kids with
good educations. Kids with
dead-end lives.

Only a few of the teens,
ages 13 to 19, that Haas and
Aitcheson targeted in their
Children's Crusade blamed
the influence of entertain-
ment media for the death
toll at Littleton and West Paducah and
Jonesboro and elsewhere.

"It was real clear to us that no one was
talking to the kids," Haas says. "Everyone
was just pontificating."

Haas and Aitcheson felt so strongly about
hearing from kids that they took a leave of
absence from their jobs as school adminis-
trators and dipped into their savings to set
off on their 11,000-mile search for answers.



TEEN TALK:

"I've never been
asked these
kinds of
questions
before," Sean
Herrera said of
Howard Haas'
list of queries
about violence
asked of kids
around the U.S.

**PHOTOCOPY
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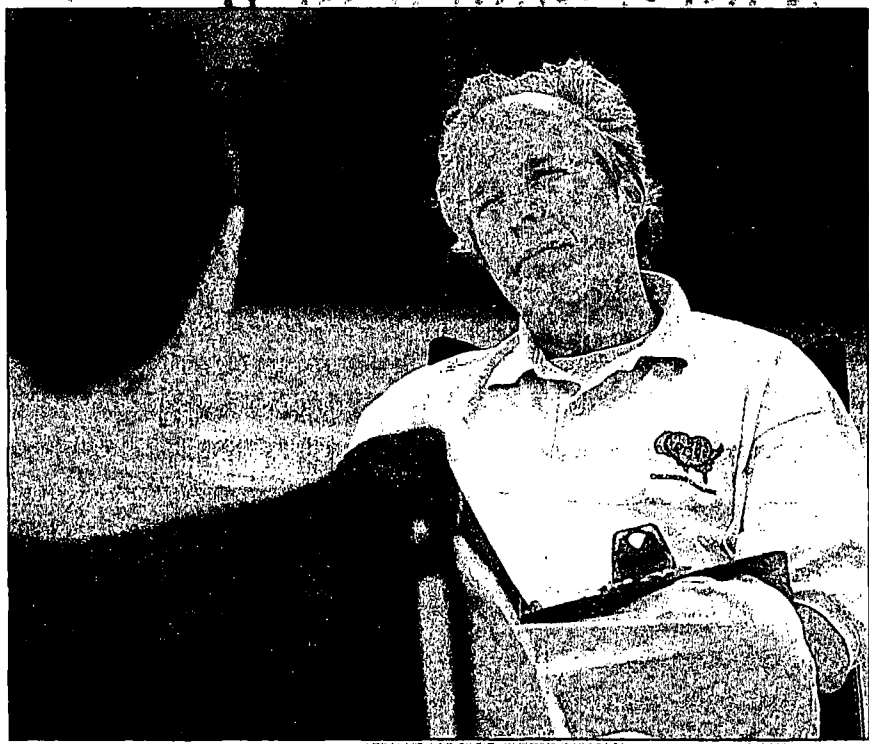
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Roots of violence

DYING TO TALK

TWO EDUCATORS SEARCH FOR THE ROOTS OF TEEN VIOLENCE



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"There are so many people out there who are dying to help and no one has told them how to help."

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Kids in the inner cities. Kids in the suburbs. Kids on farms.

Kids who live on the streets. Kids whose parents are afraid to let them out of the house. Kids with good educations. Kids with dead-end lives.

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Please see **VIOLENCE** Page 4



TEEN TALK:

"I've never been asked these kinds of questions before," Sean Herrera said of Howard Haas' list of queries about violence asked of kids around the U.S.

Powerpuff Girls coming on strong

TRENDS: They look sweet, act tough, and are capturing hearts of teens everywhere.

By **LINDA MATCHAN**
The Boston Globe

They are three little pastel-colored sisters from suburban Townsville, and they are just dripping with cuteness. They also happen to be superheroes whose motto is "saving the world before bedtime." They play hopscotch, they fly, and their names — can you stand it? — are Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup.

If you don't know them yet, you will soon. Move over, Furby. Make way, Pokemon. Pow! Pow! Pow!

We're talking about "The Powerpuff Girls," a half-hour animated comedy series that has been winning fans on the Cartoon Network. While barely big enough for kindergarten, these characters — who bust up baddies, kick up their Mary Janes and shake their pigtails — are the embodiment of Girl Power.

And they're trendsetters, too: Suddenly, little girls are sticking bows in their hair and acting tough — like Amanda Leone, 5, of Arlington, Mass.

"She stands with her hands on her hips and tells me she is going

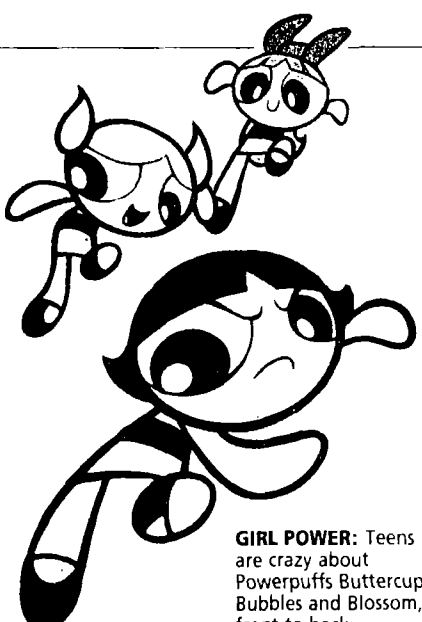
to conquer someone today," says her mother, Denise.

But Powerpuff fans aren't limited to Amanda's age group.

Only a year after the show's debut, the Powerpuff Girls have become to teen-agers — and even some older girls — what Teletubbies are to toddlers.

Teens voted "The Powerpuff Girls" the best animated series on TV, according to the latest issue of the Big Blue Dot Trend Update, an online e-mail newsletter produced by Big Blue Dot, a Watertown design firm dedicated to kids. The girls got 42 percent of the vote, beating out the Simpsons (13 percent) and Pokemon (3 percent).

Please see **POWERPUFF** Page 5



GIRL POWER: Teens are crazy about Powerpuffs Buttercup, Bubbles and Blossom, front to back.



INTERVIEW: Thanh Thach, 14, a freshman at Century High in Santa Ana, answers questions from Alex Aitcheson. "Spare the rod and spoil the child." It is true, she says.

Some straight talk from teens on violence

The Children's Crusade visited Century High in Santa Ana last week. Howard Haas and Alex Aitcheson interviewed three students: Thanh Thach, 14, a freshman; Sean Herrera, 14, a freshman; and Victor de la Rosa, 17, a junior.

All said they feel safe at their school and safe in their homes. Yet they know the troubles young people experience. Here are excerpts from one-on-one interviews:

Thanh Thach

Q. Why are kids killing kids?

A. They might be jealous of someone else. Like, they hate that person because they might be smarter or because that person is cruel to them.

Q. Does the way parents raise their children make a difference whether or not they're violent?

A. Yeah, because, like, if their parents ignore them or, like, neglect them, they might turn bad because they want their attention. There was this saying, "spare the rod and spoil the child." It is true. If you give them too much of things, they'll want everything. But if you punish them, like, fairly and right, then it's good. If you punish them too bad, like, beat them up or something, then they would turn bad.

Q. A lot of people are saying

the government needs to do more about violence across our country. Do you have any opinions on that?

A. They should have, you know, those square things that they have when you walk into the airport to see if you have weapons. They should have them here (at school), too.

Sean Herrera

Q. What kind of peer pressure have you experienced?

A. I really haven't been pressured to doing drugs or anything yet, but I know it's going to happen. People will be, like, "Oh, it's cool!" and all. But sometimes you just have to walk away — not to be cool during certain times.

Q. A lot of the adults are saying drugs are the reason why young people are violent. What do you think about that?

A. It's not the drugs. It's, like, TV. The kids watch TV and they get too harmful.

Q. You said earlier when you were younger your dad was your hero. What was it about your dad, what attributes, that made you feel he was heroic?

A. He'd always be there next to me. Like, if I got in a fight at school, he'd be there backing me up. He wouldn't be saying, "Why'd you do that!" He'd, like, be "OK, tell me your story" and he'd let me explain.

Victor de la Rosa

Q. What stresses you the most in your life?

A. I have a lot of responsibilities. When all of them show up at once, it's like a huge group of villains — like Joker and Two-Face beating up on Batman. I'm, like, "Oh, my gosh!"

Q. What advice could you give us as adults that might help young people be less violent or turn away from violence?

A. Parents have to chill out a little with blaming it on other things. They'll find a reason to blame. It depends on the way the children's emotions are that will probably make them do that. They don't have to blame it on a song or a movie. Watch your children. Watch how they are. That will tell you right there.

Q. How about young people that might not be as lucky as you having a mom and stepdad to guide you. They're at a crosswalk, perhaps getting ready to take a path that will lead to violence. What advice do you have for them?

A. They have to use their common sense. I just have to tell them, "Hey, what good is going to come out of this?" There's not going to be any happiness. There's only going to be sadness and pain. It's going to be all wrong. Just think before you act.

VIOLENCE: Looking for some answers

FROM 1
What most of the kids told them is this:

► Kids are killing kids because their parents have abandoned them. Sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally.

► Kids are killing kids because adults aren't listening and paying enough attention to them.

► Kids are killing kids because their communities provide nothing else for them to do but fall into drug use, gangs, despair.

► Kids are killing kids because they've been given too much freedom and not enough discipline.

► Kids are killing kids because the stress and the pressure at school and from their peers can be overwhelming.

► Kids are killing kids because it's just too easy to get a gun if you have the money.

Haas and Aitcheson came away convinced that what kids really want and really need overall is direction and, perhaps surprisingly, limits.

"Not one child said, 'We need more freedom,'" Haas

VOICES

Here are some of the comments from kids around the country that appear in a 20-minute tape for a teen conference on youth violence.

■ "The government should put a security guard in here 24 hours so the violence will stop. I'm worried coming out the door. Some people come out the door and they might get killed. Some people get killed on this spot. My dad was my hero — he got shot. I don't want to talk about it. Parents should keep the kids into activities."

— Marco McGhee, 14, who lives in the projects in Montgomery, Ala.

■ "A lot of kids are ostracized not only by students but by teachers. I know I was picked on a lot in high school — kids can be cruel.

think that's ridiculous."

— Sarah B. Cochran, age not listed, New London, Conn., referring to an Internet experiment

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■ "No one gives a damn anymore. For the past 20-25 years, parents have been doing one thing: They've been going out and working 40 hours a week and throwing the kids in front of a TV."

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FROM

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

PHOTOCOPY PRESERVATION

I Santa Ana last week. Howard Haas and Alex Aitcheson interviewed three students: Thanh Thach, 14, a freshman; Sean Herrera, 14, a freshman; and Victor de la Rosa, 17, a junior.

All said they feel safe at their school and safe in their homes. Yet they know the troubles young people experience. Here are excerpts from one-on-one interviews:

Thanh Thach

Q. Why are kids killing kids?

A. They might be jealous of someone else. Like, they hate that person because they might be smarter or because that person is cruel to them.

Q. Does the way parents raise their children make a difference whether or not they're violent?

A. Yeah, because, like, if their parents ignore them or, like, neglect them, they might turn bad because they want their attention. There was this saying, "spare the rod and spoil the child." It is true. If you give them too much of things, they'll want everything. But if you punish them, like, fairly and right, then it's good. If you punish them too bad, like, beat them up or something, then they would turn bad.

Q. A lot of people are saying

country. Do you have any opinions on that?

A. They should have, you know, those square things that they have when you walk into the airport to see if you have weapons. They should have them here (at school), too.

Sean Herrera

Q. What kind of peer pressure have you experienced?

A. I really haven't been pressured to doing drugs or anything yet, but I know it's going to happen. People will be, like, "Oh, it's cool" and all. But sometimes you just have to walk away — not to be cool during certain times.

Q. A lot of the adults are saying drugs are the reason why young people are violent. What do you think about that?

A. It's not the drugs. It's, like, TV. The kids watch TV and they get too harmful.

Q. You said earlier when you were younger your dad was your hero. What was it about your dad, what attributes, that made you feel he was heroic?

A. He'd always be there next to me. Like, if I got in a fight at school, he'd be there backing me up. He wouldn't be saying, "Why'd you do that!" He'd, like, be "OK, tell me your story" and he'd let me explain.

Q. What stresses you the most in your life?

A. I have a lot of responsibilities. When all of them show up at once, it's like a huge group of villains — like Joker and Two-Face beating up on Batman. I'm, like, "Oh, my gosh!"

Q. What advice could you give us as adults that might help young people be less violent or turn away from violence?

A. Parents have to chill out a little with blaming it on other things. They'll find a reason to blame. It depends on the way the children's emotions are that will probably make them do that. They don't have to blame it on a song or a movie. Watch your children. Watch how they are. That will tell you right there.

Q. How about young people that might not be as lucky as you having a mom and stepdad to guide you. They're at a crosswalk, perhaps getting ready to take a path that will lead to violence. What advice do you have for them?

A. They have to use their common sense. I just have to tell them, "Hey, what good is going to come out of this?" There's not going to be any happiness. There's only going to be sadness and pain. It's going to be all wrong. Just think before you act.

VIOLENCE: Looking for some answers

FROM 1
What most of the kids told them is this:

► Kids are killing kids because their parents have abandoned them. Sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally.

► Kids are killing kids because adults aren't listening and paying enough attention to them.

► Kids are killing kids because their communities provide nothing else for them to do but fall into drug use, gangs, despair.

► Kids are killing kids because they've been given too much freedom and not enough discipline.

► Kids are killing kids because the stress and the pressure at school and from their peers can be overwhelming.

► Kids are killing kids because it's just too easy to get a gun if you have the money.

Haas and Aitcheson came away convinced that what kids really want and really need overall is direction and, perhaps surprisingly, limits.

"Not one child said, 'We need more freedom,'" Haas says.

They did find some differences in the needs and the pressures on kids depending on where they live.

Kids in the inner city are more concerned with day-to-day survival — food, clothing, shelter, staying alive. In suburbia, they stress over peer acceptance, academic success and meeting high expectations. In rural towns, they are busy working to keep their families afloat financially.

No matter the circumstances, the educators discovered that kids were more than willing to talk to them.

In fact, Aitcheson says, "They were dying to talk."

And now Haas and Aitcheson, who became close friends while working together 14 years ago at Willard Intermediate School in Santa Ana, are dying to have someone listen to what the kids had to say.

Next week, they'll take a 20-minute tape that took them 24 hours to put together to Washington, D.C., where 500 teens from around the nation will come to brainstorm solutions at a conference called "Voices Against Violence."

VOICES

Here are some of the comments from kids around the country that appear in a 20-minute tape for a teen conference on youth violence.

■
"The government should put a security guard in here 24 hours so the violence will stop. I'm worried coming out the door. Some people come out the door and they might get killed. Some people get killed on this spot. My dad was my hero — he got shot. I don't want to talk about it. Parents should keep the kids into activities."

— Marco McGhee, 14, who lives in the projects in Montgomery, Ala.

■
"A lot of kids are ostracized not only by students but by teachers. I know I was picked on a lot in high school — kids can be cruel. At one time I looked like the people who they blamed the Littleton crisis on. I overheard the principal saying, 'Weird looks means you're weird.'"

— Stacey Cavanaugh, 18, homeless in New York

■
"In my school it took us 50 seconds to find out how to make a pipe bomb. And I

While there, the men plan to buttonhole politicians and bureaucrats.

"People can use this any way they want for their own agenda," Haas says. "We don't care. We just want to get the message out."

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE WORTH?

They left Aug. 1 and returned Sept. 24. They've traveled to 32 cities and towns.

They conducted about 150 one-on-one interviews and talked to an additional 120 kids in classroom discussions. That translates into nearly 60 hours of videotape they hope to turn into a documentary.

Hundreds of other youths

think that's ridiculous."

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■
"It's the stress of school. You just don't want to deal with it anymore. People at school are really mean to each other. Kids yell at each other, scream at each other. Punchin' and kickin'. Schools sometimes don't do anything about violence. They let it slide. There is peer pressure — kids will tell other kids to hit other kids, like in the face."

— Blake Hawkins, 13, Murietta, Ga.

have e-mailed the two men with their thoughts.

In their interviews, they asked the kids a standard set of questions so that they could compare answers.

The big question was why kids are killing kids.

Others included: What should the government do? What are schools doing? What is your life worth? What part do racism, drug use, peer pressure, child abuse, poverty play? How influential are music, videos, television and movies? Does belief in God make someone less likely to kill?

They asked for advice for Please see **VIOLENCE** Page 5

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POWERPUFF: Girl Power

FROM 1

And Powerpuff merchandise is hot. You think Pokemon is saturating the market? Just wait till you see what the Cartoon Network has up its sleeve with the Powerpuff Girls.

"In terms of the spectrum of heat, this is our first breakout for a real opportunity at the retail product level," says a nearly breathless Bob Bryant, vice president for off-channel commerce at the Cartoon Network. "We're doing just about everything with them in the development of what's become a really hot property for us."

He then outlines plans to roll out Powerpuff underwear, plush toys, outfits and accessories for young children and teen-agers, and he indicates that this is only the beginning.

The show's fans are buying into the marketing machine. "They're cute and funny," says target audience member Rebecca Manning, 14, a freshman at Newton (Mass.) North High School, who considers the show "neat" and has bought herself a Powerpuff T-shirt.

"And they have Girl Power," adds her friend Alyssa Sweet, 13, of Newton.

The teen-age girl world, apparently, has been poised for Girl Power. The Spice Girls

foreshadowed it, with their freewheeling feminism and attitude. The sports world has heralded it, with the victories of female athletes like the Williams sisters in tennis and the World Cup soccer players. Even the fashion world has hinted at it.

Add a hint of the Japanese-style animation that's the rage, and suddenly everything coalesces in the unexpected guise of three doe-eyed kindergartners who aren't allowed to stay out after dark yet fight evil menaces like Fuzzy Lumpkins and Mojo Jojo.

How to account for their popularity?

"I think there is a backlash against the idea of sarcasm and irony and the whole snotty attitude in American culture," suggests Bob Thompson, founding director of the Center for the Study of Popular Television at Syracuse University.

The show is "a way to go back (to childhood) and not have to worry about what everyone else is thinking about you, and about stresses like social life and popularity," theorizes Anna Grady, 16, who was recently seen riffling through Powerpuff shirts at the Hot Topic store at the Natick (Mass.) Mall.

Linda Simensky, vice president of original animation for the Cartoon Network, offers an opposing view: "I think it's the idea (that) girls always come out the winners."

Elizabeth Nephew agrees. "Even though the show is produced by a man, it seems to be kind of a commentary on feminism and role models." Nephew is a graphic artist who designed a Powerpuff Girls Web site (<http://www.nephco.com/powerpuffgirls>).

Perhaps no one is more surprised by the show's success than its creator, Craig McCracken, 28, of Sherman Oaks. When he first came up with the idea of a show about three mini-superheroines, he presumed his audience would be little children. Still, he held out hope that the subtleties wouldn't be lost on older people.

"My friends all liked it. We were hoping people would get it," McCracken says. "It is a little bit tongue-in-cheek and campy. It's the basic idea of these cute things being tough, beating up an evil monkey. When you step back, you say, 'Wait a minute, I'm seeing little children beat up a monkey.'"

VIOLENCE: Teens longing to be heard

FROM 4

other kids, for parents, for adults in general.

A girl in a Salt Lake City suburb suggested putting all the money spent on gang prevention into parenting programs. A boy in Selma said the first thing parents need to do is teach their children about God. A girl in Philadelphia said to listen, don't assume. A boy in Newark begged for youth activities.

At Century High in Santa Ana last week, they interviewed three students who come from loving, supportive families. All three left impressed by the attention.

Sean Herrera, 14, was one of them: "I've never been asked these kinds of questions before. Even though on TV there are things saying ask your kids, I've never been asked these questions before by my parents. They just assume I'll do right."

So far, Sean says, their assumption is correct. And he expects it to stay that way. But he believes that by asking these questions, kids who are confused may be helped: "It will make the kids think. They will think before they do it."

Do what?
"Something wrong."

WARM WELCOMES, COLD REALITY

Haas, 49, and Aitcheson, 48, have been concentrating on the Washington teen conference since returning home. In November, they expect to return to teaching jobs since district policies won't allow them to come back as administrators.

Haas, of Mission Viejo, was principal at La Mirada High in La Mirada. Aitcheson, of Temecula, was director of Val Verde Unified School District in Riverside County.

They put about \$60,000 of their own money where their mouths are to help cover expenses for their crusade. That included hiring two cameramen from the Los Angeles

FOR MORE INFO

To learn more about the Children's Crusade and to view pictures and comments of some of the kids Howard Haas and Alex Aitcheson interviewed, visit their Web site at www.childrens-crusade.com. Haas and Aitcheson invite teens to e-mail them through the Web site with their thoughts on youth violence. Anyone who would like to support their work can reach Haas at HmHaas@telis.org and Aitcheson at Aaitcheson@earthlink.net or (909) 302-8128.

area, Jose Bravo and Ali Santana, to record the interviews.

They got help along the way, too. The Kiwanis Club of La Mirada arranged accommodations with other Kiwanis Club members around the country and collected about \$10,000 from supporters. General Motors Corp. donated use of a van.

Marriott put them up some nights, as did family and friends. A company based in Corona called True Colors Communication Group gave them the use of a communications product to break the ice with the kids before conducting interviews and helped with other logistics.

Some of their interviews were arranged through schools and youth organizations, but the men tried to do most of their work out in the communities with kids who weren't handpicked.

They would go "fishing for kids," driving into neighborhoods to stop where they saw kids hanging out. The van explained their purpose with messages on its sides: "The Children's Crusade, Listen to the Children, Children are the Heart of Our Nation."

Their visits with inner city

kids in New York, New Jersey and Chicago left the sharpest impressions. They saw the stark poverty: the boarded-up buildings, the stench of junk-strewn lots, the listlessness of kids with nothing to do.

Those kids, especially, wanted someone to care and to listen. Haas and Aitcheson say they often felt like they were playing the roles of the fathers that were missing in many of their lives.

In Newark, N.J., they visited Prince Street, a venture that came with warnings. People told them that if they went into that tough neighborhood, they might not come out. They found the opposite, Haas says.

"The kids and the people there opened up and shared their hearts with us."

Wherever they went, however, they left with the same feeling. "Every kid," Aitcheson says, "you want to just take them with you and say, 'OK, how can I help?'"

They also found that many of the adults they encountered were hungry to make a difference.

Says Haas: "There are so many people out there who are dying to help and no one has told them how to help."

Haas and Aitcheson want to continue their interviews, traveling through California and the Northwest. They dream of holding a summit attended by the kids they interviewed. But both plans will take more money.

They'll need help as well to get the documentary done. Aitcheson said one estimate they got just to transcribe the interviews for the video editing process was \$15,000.

They believe they've learned why kids are killing kids. They learned something about themselves, too, about the difference an individual can make.

Says Aitcheson: "I know that I can do so much more than I thought I could before leaving."

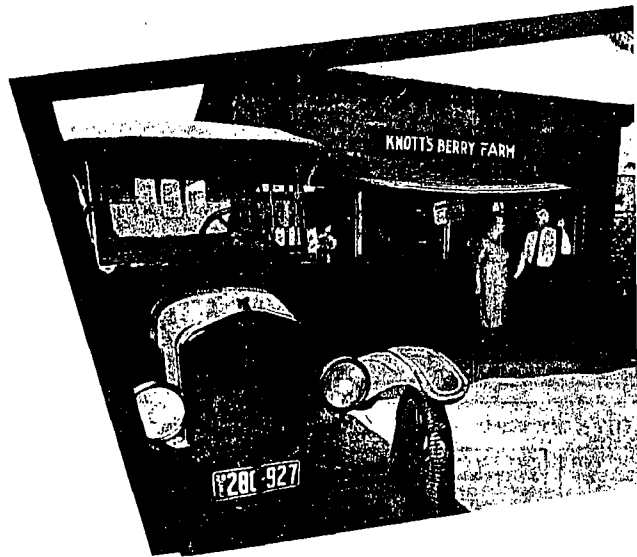
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