

The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.

"Without vision, the people perish."

AIDS Hits Texas High School (...plus an AIDS Update)

Last December an AIDS counselor by the name of Dona Spence dropped a bombshell on the Johntown, Texas, school board by informing them that six of 197 students at Rivercrest High School were infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and would eventually come down with AIDS. Spence, who works for a state-funded AIDS program covering nine counties in northeast Texas, also reported seven more cases at two other schools in the area, making a total of 13 involving teens aged 16 to 19, about evenly divided between girls and boys.

The news sent shock-waves across this remote, conservative, heavily Baptist region 100 miles east of Dallas. To date, Texas health officials know of about 360 teenagers infected with HIV in the entire state. This outbreak in Johntown represents a rate of infection seven times higher than the national average.

Spence says the students were tested individually at their own request, and subsequently contacted her for counseling. No one else — not even their parents — knows who they are. Johntown superintendent Freddy Wade, who said he was "surprised, but not shocked" at Spence's figures, waited until after the Christmas holidays to inform

the school and issue teachers rubber gloves for handling students who may be injured. Two junior-varsity basketball games were canceled when parents from another town refused to let their children play Rivercrest, but on Valentine's Day a different opponent took the floor and gave Rivercrest a symbol of support, a Valentine reading, "Our Heart Is With You."

Spence is a 40-year-old nurse whose husband died of AIDS, contracted from a blood transfusion, but who is not infected herself. She has a reputation as a crusader and agrees that "the most important thing in my life is to fight against the thing that took what I loved the most away."

Undoubtedly, the episode has been a learning experience for everyone. To Wade, it proves that "there are no locations that are immune to the virus. We may live in a rural area, but we're in contact with the rest of the world." One Rivercrest High School senior said it would not be surprising if the report were true. "There's not a lot to do around here, so sex becomes something everyone expects," said the student, who asked not to be identified.

To many students, the news has been an occasion to re-examine their behavior. Most

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