

Study shows church important to young people

United Press International
MINNEAPOLIS — Young people who value the church and are active in it tend to engage in less anti-social behavior than others, a new study shows. The \$500,000 study by Search Institute of Minneapolis says such youth have more con-

cern for people and the world than those with a less positive posture toward the church. The research project was sponsored by 13 youth-serving organizations and includes 11 religious denominations, 8,165 young adolescents and 10,467 of their parents.

Overall, the study indicates American families are stronger and healthier than often depicted and that the young adolescent "has more redeeming qualities than many were willing to admit." Predominantly church-related families were involved in the research.

The researchers said many fifth through ninth graders think about or experiment with areas many adults wish could wait until at least high school. They listed the following as trouble spots or areas deserving serious thought and reflection:

- The nearly 20 percent of young adolescents who say they experiment with sexual intercourse.
- Sexual and physical abuse that a significant number of young adolescents express.
- Involvement some young adolescents have with alcohol and marijuana.
- Worry expressed by young adolescents about nuclear destruction.
- Tension experienced by some families, including family violence and marital conflict.
- "The relatively common-place occurrence of some forms of aggression among young adolescents."
- Social alienation experienced by some youths, especially boys.

Similarly, attitudes toward church become less favorable

for boys and girls between those grades.

But by the ninth grade, 40 percent of boys and 51 percent of girls still say the church is very important or extremely important to them.

Most said they pray every day or most days.

Eighty-six percent of the respondents said they were sure or quite sure God exists, and 87 percent said they believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Youth with a restrictive religious orientation that emphasizes God as judge and ruler instead of God's love and forgiveness tended to be high on anti-social behavior and alcohol use, the study showed.

This group also tended to

have more racial and sexist prejudice.

The study found alcohol usage quite common by the eighth and ninth grades. Twelve percent of the fifth graders and 28 percent of the ninth graders reported being drunk during the previous 12 months.

Twelve percent of the fifth graders and 20 percent of the ninth graders said they had used marijuana once or more in the same period. The figures were slightly higher for plain cigarette smoking.

Half the adolescents studied said they spent at least three hours daily watching television. Nearly one-fourth played video games three hours or more a week.

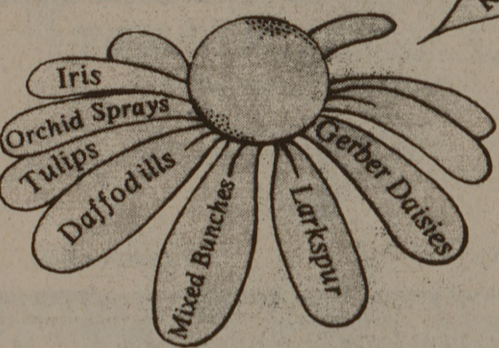
Of the parents surveyed, 86 percent said they found satisfaction in parenting.

More than one-third of the parents and children said they wanted to talk more with each other about sexuality, drugs and alcohol, and morality.

Search Institute, which made the study, is an independent non-profit organization with 25 years of experience in youth-related research. It is headed by Dr. Merton P. Strommen, a clergyman and educational psychologist.

The research was directed by a team headed by Dr. Peter Benson, a Search Institute research director. It was largely funded by a grant from Life Endowment Inc.

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Varied conditions lead to malnutrition in elderly

United Press International

The elderly are especially vulnerable to inadequate nutrition, says Dr. Harold H. Sandstead.

"It's a real tough problem" because of age-related diseases, denture problems, inability to grocery shop, limited income and alcoholism, Sandstead said in a telephone interview.

"Many of these people need somebody else to thoughtfully help them, particularly if they're alone," the doctor said.

"I think that the family ought to be involved in assisting in getting people help."

Sandstead is director of the USDA's recently established Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, Boston.

He said researchers there will try to determine whether nutrition affects longevity and the occurrence of certain diseases and conditions associated with aging.

For the elderly without families, he said, life is especially difficult. In such cases, he suggests that neighbors and friends bring their situations to the attention of people who can help.

As a start, he said, the elderly need a balanced diet.

"They need a broad variety of foods on a regular basis," Sandstead said. "If they do that, they have a high probability of meeting their nutrient requirements for daily living."

Certain diseases associated with aging can cause potential problems with eating, such as gastro-intestinal tract function

and food absorption.

A physician and dietitian should design diets to meet individual needs. A dietitian also can provide counseling, recipes and "all sorts of practical advice," he said.

Those who have a mechanical problem select softer foods.

"If they have poorly fitting dentures or don't have dentures then they need to get dentures," he said.

"Old people have infirmities. They have difficulty getting around. Then their ability to shop is cut down and their choices are restricted."

"Many of these people need somebody else to thoughtfully help them, particularly if they're alone," the doctor said.

"There are groups that will help deliver their meals to them."

Sandstead suggests friends and family do their shopping.

"In some communities there are nurses who will look in on these people," he said.

Sometimes food selection is limited by income. After paying fixed living costs such as rent, heating and clothing, the elderly may have little or nothing left to spend for groceries, he said.

Poor nutrition may increase susceptibility to infectious diseases, delay recovery time in a hospital and impair the person's ability to cope with minor illnesses, he said.

He said social isolation can be reduced with the help of community resources — such as senior centers and churches or synagogues — where the elderly can meet to eat and socialize.

"All of these have beneficial effects on their nutrition," Sandstead said. "One of the problems if people are isolated or living alone is to get them out with their contemporaries. Family members looking in on them can also make a big difference in their nutrition."

Another problem arises when a spouse dies.

"The other member of the family may become severely depressed. And with depression they lose their appetite, they don't eat well and then they become malnourished."

"It's important that family and friends look in on the person. It may be necessary for the (survivor) to live for a temporary time with the family until they can recover and get back on an even keel."

Sandstead said alcoholism is surprisingly common among the elderly.

"It's kind of ignored but shouldn't be."

Heavy drinkers don't eat properly, he said. "It's important that people address the issue honestly — don't brush it under the rug."

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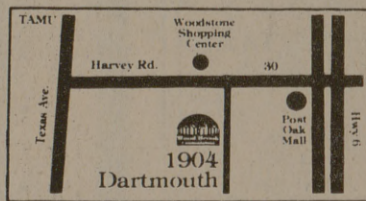
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Auto deaths drop; incidents rising

United Press International

NEW YORK — Auto accident fatalities dropped sharply in 1983 but the number of accidents appears to be rising, says economist Sean Mooney.

The vice president of the Insurance Information Institute bases his statement on a study he made in 12 states. Mooney found accidents up 5.6 percent from July through December, compared with a 2.2 percent drop during the previous six months.

In September alone, he said, accidents rose 10.2 percent,

compared with September 1982.

Mooney said some of the decline in fatalities resulted from efforts throughout the country to get drunk drivers off the roads. He said grass roots groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and Students Against Driving Drunk have helped, as have many insurance companies and associations.

The states from which he obtained police-reported data are Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Washington.

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