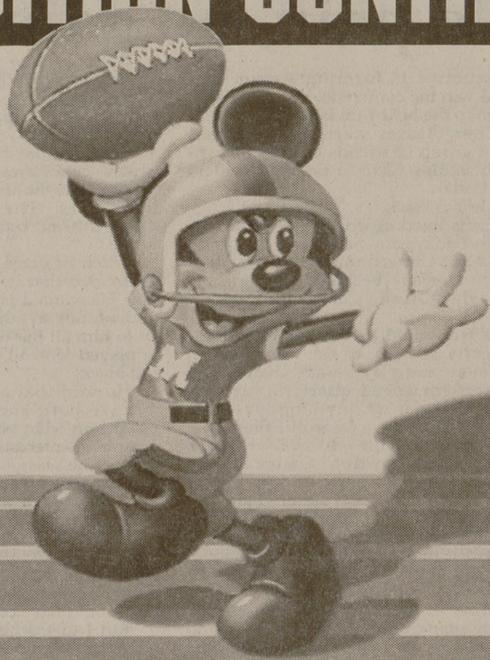


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Kids influence economy

Youths spend over \$1 billion for back-to-school, author says

By Chris Carroll
The Battalion

Schoolchildren from the ages of four to 12 will spend more than \$1 billion of their own money as they prepare to go back to school in August and influence how their parents spend another \$14 billion, Dr. James McNeal, author of "Kids as Customers," said.

Kids will place a high importance on conspicuous items, such as clothes, shoes and backpacks, because these items help determine kids' identities and peer group memberships, McNeal said.

Products bearing images from the movie "Batman" and the TV series "Beverly Hills 90210" are expected to be big sellers when kids start their back-to-school shopping.

The decisions on what items are popular are made by kids, but they receive information about different products from a variety of sources.

Twenty-five percent of kids' information about products comes from television and 25 percent

from store visits. But most product information comes from other kids. Movies are also becoming important sources of product information, McNeal said.

"I don't see anything unusual about this year, except there will be a lot more 'Batman' products and more '90210' products. Kids will be doing what's cool and wearing what's cool. There's some kind of code that kids use to communicate what's cool, and marketers have yet to crack that code."

"When kids start participating with other kids as part of a group, having the right things becomes more important. . ."

- Dr. James McNeal of "Kids as Customers"

McNeal said having the right stuff to head back to school becomes important to kids at an early age.

"When kids start participating with other kids as part of a group, having the right things becomes more important. This is usually about the first grade," McNeal said. "By the time kids are 10 or 11, they are taking almost all of their buying cues from other kids."

Gigi Cuccaro, a merchandising assistant at the College Station K-

Mart store, says the back-to-school season has already started.

"We're starting early this year. We've just started setting up our back-to-school stuff, but kids have already started coming in. It looks like stuff from 'Batman' and '90210' will be pretty popular."

Cuccaro expects business to pick up when kids head back to school.

"Our business usually picks up about 25 percent. It's really tough, though, because there's only so many dollars in town and compe-

tion is pretty fierce," she said.

Wal-Mart in College Station ex-

pects a 30 to 40 percent increase in the first week of August, the peak of the back-to-school season, a store assistant manager said. Wal-Mart has been preparing for the back-to-school rush for about a month.

McNeal said kids across the country will spend \$300 million of their own money and \$8 billion of their parents' on snack items, \$20 million of their own and \$3.9 billion of their parents' on clothes, including \$600 million for shoes.

Drug cartel members escape

Leader overpowers guards during attempt at prisoner transfer

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Drug kingpin Pablo Escobar and his lieutenants overpowered guards seeking to transfer them to a military jail and escaped Wednesday after a gunbattle that left at least two dead, officials said.

The escape of Escobar, one of the world's richest and most notorious businessmen, with hundreds of murders to his name, was a major blow to the government, which has been unable to counter the strength of the cocaine cartels.

It was in response to reports that Escobar was operating his drug business from the luxurious ranch house prison that officials entered the jail Tuesday night to transfer Escobar and his 14 lieutenants.

The cartel leader instead seized three of the offi-

cials — the head of the jail, the national prison director, and an assistant justice minister.

About 400 army commandos raided the prison at dawn Wednesday, freed the captives and captured five cartel members. Escobar fled with nine other cartel members, said President Cesar Gaviria.

Gaviria, in a nationally broadcast speech late Wednesday, appealed to Escobar to surrender and said there was an outside chance that soldiers combing the property for hidden passages might find him.

At 10:40 a.m., Escobar had phoned reporters, saying he was in a prison tunnel and would fight to the death. That call appears to have been a bluff.

When the army regained control over the prison 200 miles northwest of the capital, Escobar was gone, according to the Senate president, Joe Blackburn.

Gaviria said at a news conference that the army found no tunnel under the jail. He offered no explanation for how Escobar could have escaped when surrounded by 400 soldiers.



Gaviria

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Repeal of legislation may effect local liquor prices

By Robin Goodpaster
The Battalion

The Texas Legislature's proposed repeal of the requirement that liquor stores must be 51 percent owned by Texas residents may reduce the price of retail liquor for consumers, but it could also drive small liquor stores out of business, said a local liquor store owner.

"Competition is good, and I welcome it," said J.J. Ruffino, owner of J.J.'s liquor store in College Station. "But, if a huge retailer comes in, they may drive the small mom and pop establishments out of business."

The current law of 51 percent ownership of any liquor establishment by Texas residents encourages local liquor sales, Ruffino said.

The Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission is going through changes due to Sunset Law legislation.

The Sunset Laws are designed to make necessary revisions in state agencies. For example, at sunset on September

1, the Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission will cease to exist unless new bills are passed.

However, the TABC will probably not go through the Sunset process and will continue to exist, Rob Giesecke, an administrative assistant in Representative Steve Ogden's office, said.

There have been 15 recommendations made to the Sunset Advisory Commission for changes in the TABC. These recommendations were made by the Sunset staff, TABC staff and members of the public.

Some of them are:

- clarification of statutory prohibitions on sales to minors
- elimination of the two percent alcohol excise tax discount and provision of authority to impose penalties for late payment
- removal of certain prohibitions on charitable contributions and sponsorship by wine and spirits industries.

Representative Steve Ogden expects the liquor legislation to be a big issue in the next session of the Texas legislature.

Study shows cost of AIDS treatment soaring in U.S.

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — The price of caring for one person with AIDS in the United States has soared to \$38,000 a year, while developing countries harder hit by the disease struggle to spend a few hundred dollars per patient.

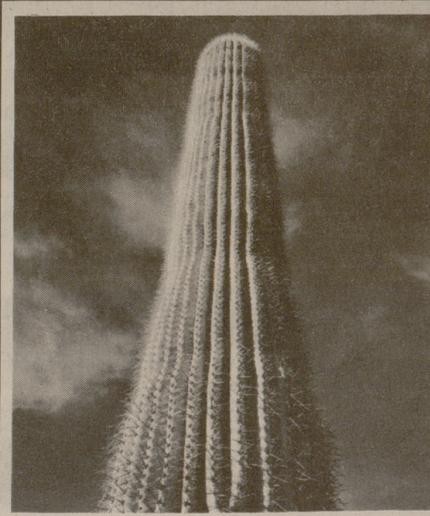
Researchers said costs have risen substantially in the last year alone, in part because of the high price of drugs.

The figures were disclosed in studies presented this week at the eighth International Conference on AIDS.

While the week-long meeting has focused largely on the medical and personal tragedy of the disease, the latest research shows that AIDS is a financial disaster as well.

"Other types of costs can't be expressed in dollars — the cost of fear, the cost of grief, the cost of inequity and discrimination and the long-term cost of a pandemic that does not receive the attention it deserves," said Dr. Danie Tarantola of the Harvard School of Public Health.

His research showed the financial inequities in the pandemic — or worldwide epidemic — of AIDS between wealthy nations and poor ones.



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