

Survey: teenagers value family time

By Ben Feller
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Meet the parents: role models, confidants, weekend buddies. Not a bad list of labels, especially since it came from the kids.

Almost 75 percent of high school students say they get along very well or even extremely well with their parents or guardians, a new survey found. Most of the rest call the relationship "just OK," and only 3 percent say they and their parents don't get along well.

Overall, teenagers have a lot more admiration than animosity for family members, despite popular notions to the contrary. "The State of Our Nation's Youth" survey says.

"Even though it's a time when I'm supposed to be going off on my own, I still like the fact that my parents are there to help," said Anya Edun of Pembroke Pines, Fla., who took part in the survey before graduating high school in June.

"They have experienced so much; they're my number one resource to the real world," Edun said.

The Horatio Alger Association, which provides college scholarships and mentoring to needy students, issued the annual report on youth attitudes Tuesday. Conducted in April and May, the phone survey was given to 1,055 high school students, most of them 14 to 18 years old.

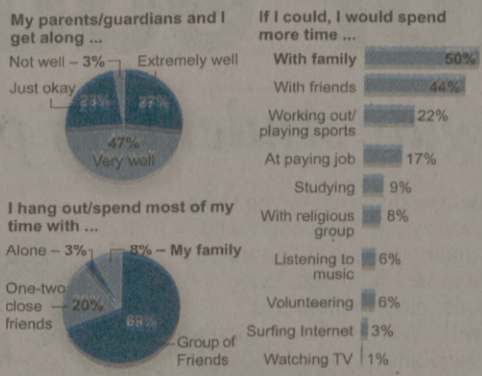
Consider this family portrait: Asked how they'd like to spend more time, more teens chose being with their families over relaxing with friends, playing sports or anything else.

That's no surprise to Edun, who will start classes this month at the University of Miami.

"Hanging out with your family, that's not a bad thing anymore," Edun said. "When you're with

Teens value family in spite of stereotype

According to "The State of our Nation's Youth" annual survey, most teenagers get along well with their families.



SOURCE: Horatio Alger Association

family, you are participating in sports or playing family games. And honestly, when I call my friends on the weekend, they'll say, 'I, too, am going out to dinner with family.'"

Teens put family members atop their list of role models, far ahead of entertainers and athletes, and more than nine in 10 said they have at least one family member to confide in.

Such attitudes prevail even as teens are surrounded by bad news, from war in Iraq to scandals in business and the church, said Peter Hart, whose research company wrote the report.

"During all of the turmoil and change, instead of isolating themselves, I think they've drawn themselves back toward family," Hart said.

Even the disputes teens have with their parents aren't of great consequence, the survey finds. The

most common argument, teens say, is over cleaning their rooms. In a boom time for bellybutton rings and tattoos, only 4 percent of fights are about student appearance.

The findings should be encouraging to busy parents, but they also constitute a warning, Hart said.

"The kids who are in high school are telling parents, 'We're listening to you, we care about what you think, and we'd like to spend more time with you,'" Hart said.

Academic demands put the most stress on students, more so than family squabbles, financial worries or social pressures, the survey says.

Asked about pressure to get good grades, 42 percent of students called it a major problem, up from 26 percent two years ago. The largest increases were among black students, sophomores and juniors.

Among other findings from the survey: —Almost half of students said they have solid or strong confidence in Congress. Only 26 percent said the same about the media.

—Fifty-eight percent of students said they have their own television, and 45 percent have their own cell phone. Almost every student reported access to a computer in the home.

—Fewer than 10 percent of students said pressure to do drugs or to have sex before they're ready is a major problem.

—Forty-seven percent of students report spending six or more hours per week on homework, up from 37 percent last year.

—Sixty percent of students say standardized tests are a good way to measure their progress. Last year, 65 percent thought such tests were a good idea.

The poll had an error margin of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Dewhurst: legal action may come

By Natalie Gott
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — With 11 Democrats staging a boycott of the Texas Senate over congressional redistricting, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst warned Tuesday that he may turn to legal action to force them to return to the state.

"I'm not going to discuss our legal options. But it's very, very clear that there are a number of things we can do to compel the attendance of the absent members," Dewhurst told reporters in Austin.

Sen. Leticia Van de Putte of San Antonio, who chairs the Senate Democratic Caucus, said she couldn't comment until she sees what Dewhurst does.

"We certainly worked with him during the regular session but another persona seems to be emerging during this special session," Van de Putte said from the hotel the lawmakers are staying at in Albuquerque, out of reach from the Senate sergeant-at-arms, who can compel the senators to return to the Capitol.

Dewhurst, a Republican who presides over the Texas Senate, said consideration of a lawsuit is not a threat.

But he also said, directing his comments to the absent senators: "If you don't come back in a timely fashion we're going to be forced to look at other options, including legal options. And don't put us into that position."

The Democrats, themselves, have been considering legal options, although when asked about any plans to file a lawsuit, they are vague, saying only that they are keeping their options open.

The Senate Democrats say they are resolved to blocking congressional redistricting. Their absence at the Capitol has brought the Senate to a standstill for more than week because not enough senators are present to make a quorum.

Republicans, led by U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, have been pushing for state lawmakers to redraw the state's congressional boundaries, saying voting trends show the state should have more GOP representation in Washington. Democrats outnumber Republicans 17-15 in the delegation.

The Senate Democrats fled Texas shortly before Republican Gov. Rick Perry called a second special legislative session on redistricting, after the issue failed in two previous sessions.

NASA won't challenge any recommendations

By Mike Schneider
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA will not challenge any of the recommendations to be issued by the board that investigated the loss of space shuttle Columbia, the agency's deputy administrator said Tuesday.

However, deputy administrator Fred Gregory and two other NASA officials were unwilling to talk publicly about what is likely to be the board's most far-reaching recommendation: changing NASA's culture.

Gregory, associate administrator for space flight Bill Readdy and

associate administrator for safety Bryan O'Connor spoke at a news conference Tuesday while visiting the Kennedy Space Center for discussions on how NASA is preparing to return the space shuttle fleet to service.

The window for launching a shuttle is March 11 to April 6, they said for the first time.

"Is March ambitious? Probably," Readdy said.

They met with members of the Stafford-Covey Return to Flight Task Group, a 27-member body chartered to help the agency implement the final recommendations of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board.

The task group is scheduled to meet Wednesday with the accident board chairman, retired Navy Adm. Harold Gehman Jr., and hold its first public meeting Thursday.

"There will be no attempt whatsoever to argue or defend a recommendation from the CAIB," Gregory said. "The board has not published the report yet and I may have to back off a little bit ... but my assumption is that we would follow to the letter the recommendations."

Columbia was destroyed during re-entry on Feb. 1, killing all seven astronauts on board. The disaster has been blamed on a piece of foam insulation that broke off the external fuel

tank during liftoff and caused a hole in the left wing.

The board's recommendations are expected to be issued at the end of the month.

Some investigation board members have said publicly that the recommendations will be fruitless if NASA doesn't change its culture for decision-making.

Board members and former NASA employees have pointed to attitudes of superiority, fear of retribution by lower-level employees, communications problems and strained relationships between key divisions of NASA as part of its difficult culture.

Security

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"They're going to be subject to extraordinary scrutiny," Stempler said. But, he added, "I'd be disappointed if they weren't doing anything different, given these warnings."

The advisory was the latest effort to tighten security since the government publicly warned on July 28 that terrorists may try more suicide hijackings.

The departments of State and Homeland Security suspended two programs that allowed foreigners to stay in U.S. airports without visas while awaiting flights to other countries. The State Department also revised an existing caution for American travelers to reflect the perceived hijacking threat.

Michael Cherkasky, a for-

mer New York state prosecutor who was involved in the first World Trade Center bombing case, said the recent warning was no surprise since terrorists have for years tried — and sometimes succeeded — to blow up planes by hiding bombs in electronics.

"It's in the al-Qaida manual," he said. "It's not a shock."

A thumbnail-sized circuit board inside a radio detonated the bomb that blew up Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

Ramzi Yousef, mastermind of the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, plotted to simultaneously blow up 11 airliners by smuggling parts of bombs onto each airplane and assembling them in the lavatories, Cherkasky said.

"If they do it well, it's extraor-

dinarily difficult to detect," Cherkasky said. Closer scrutiny of electronics is just one way that a many-layered system of airport security can detect a sophisticated plot, he said.

Airlines have struggled to regain passengers since the Sept. 11 attacks. Darryl Jenkins, head of George Washington University's Aviation Institute, said the terror warnings will keep people from flying during what should be the peak summer travel season.

"None of this is good," Jenkins said. "These are not the kinds of things that cause people to book trips."

Diana Cronan, spokeswoman for the Air Transport Association, the trade group for major airlines, said, "We are trying to work together with Homeland Security."

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