

Millions of children go to empty homes after school

Each day after school, millions of children go to an empty home and are alone for an hour or more. Experts estimate that nearly 5 million school-aged children spend time without adult supervision during a typical week.

Although the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that school-aged children, ages 5-12, be supervised, for many parents this isn't possible. When faced with this situation, the academy states that maturity, not age, should be the determining factor in whether a child can be left alone.

There are a number of important points parents should consider prior



cris lovington

• prevention center

to allowing their children to be unsupervised after school. Parents need to assess their children.

Does he or she have the personality, self-confidence and judgment skills to accept this responsibility? Will the experience be positive and help build and enhance the child's self-image, or will it promote addi-

tional anxiety in the child who may be afraid to stay alone? Having a family conference to discuss the arrangement is a good place to start. House rules, expectations of both parent and child and a daily routine can be defined.

At the end of the day, parents can also use the experience to have regular family meetings to help ensure that the arrangement is still working and identify any alter-

tations that need to be made.

Here are some steps that you and your children can take to help ensure a positive after-school experience.

Before allowing your child to go home alone, you should:

- Determine if there are other community resources or organizations providing after-school care or support.

- Ask your child how he or she feels about being alone. Is your child afraid to be left alone, or does he or she have the maturity and initiative to assume that responsibility?

- Decide if you feel that your child

can follow directions and solve problems on his or her own.

- Determine how long your child will be alone, how accessible you or another trusted adult will be in case of an emergency and determine how safe the neighborhood is by contacting your local law enforcement agency and checking the incidence of crime in your neighborhood.

- Make sure you've set specific rules that are to be followed by your child while he or she is alone and give your child specific instructions on how to reach you at all times. This also includes information on what to do if your child needs assistance and can't reach you right away.

- Remember that you are in charge, even if it is from a distance.

Once you've decided to proceed, you should check to make sure your child knows his or her full name, address and telephone number; your full name, the exact name of the place where you work, your work telephone number and any pager or cellular telephone numbers that you may have; and how to make a telephone call to request help in an emergency using 911 or the appropriate number(s) in your area.

If you would like to receive more information on child safety, please contact us at 785-899-3848 or crisl@st-tel.net for Cris or Vickie Beiser in Colby at 785-462-8152 or vbeiser@st-tel.net

Teams signing up to Bowl for Kids' Sake

Time is quickly approaching for our third annual "Bowl for Kids' Sake." As with the last year, the event will be held at Bowladium Lanes and will be Saturday, April 3.

If you would like to form a four-person team or just be assigned to a team, call me at 890-3665. Last year's event went off without a hitch and was enjoyed by all who attended.

All of the money that is pledged for the event stays entirely in Sherman County. Without this support from our county, Big Brothers Big Sisters would not be able to survive.

Not only does the financial support make a difference, many times the event helps bring an awareness of the mentoring need in our county. Several bowlers became interested in volunteering and getting their children involved in the program after participating in last year's activity.

"Bowl for Kids' Sake" is a positive, fun day to have some fun and yet provide resources for kids who need a mentor. So, if you would like



dennis daise

• big brothers big sisters

to participate or contribute in some way, please give me a call.

In 2003, we had all ages bowl, ranging from kids to grandparents. Grandparents are increasingly becoming the caregivers to their grandkids. In a recent article from *Jubilee* by Becky Beane entitled "To Grandmother's House We Go," the role grandparents are playing in young people's lives is incredible.

The article states that "nearly 2.4 million grandparents are the primary caregivers for more than 4.5 million grandchildren."

The American Association of Retired Persons recently estimated "that the number of grandparent-headed households has increased

30 percent since 1990. Numerous factors can be tied to the percentage increase: a parent's inability to raise

use."

As we have seen in the headlines of *The Goodland Star-News* and other regional and state papers, the meth labs are a nightmare to many children who end up in foster care or, if possible, with family that are willing to help out, as with grandparents as stated above.

It is a reality that puts family or grandparents in a situation they thought would be a time they could enjoy their grandkids, but instead, they are raising them.

Regardless of what caused the parenting need, grandparents see what is needed, but their bodies say, "What?!"

Beane continues in her article, "Elders on fixed incomes strain to cover expenses. . . plus the health issues that come with advancing

age restrict many grandparents' mobility and endurance. "In my own eyes, I have witnessed cases of grandparents taking charge of a grandchild that pushes them to dangerous risks of health. An example of servanthood that is sad, and yet a gift of what it is to give until it hurts regardless of the circumstances."

Beane finishes the article following the same theme and sharing one view of a grandparent: "For most grandparents, raising grandchildren is truly a labor of love-enduring financial hardship, weakening bodies and the postponement of personal dreams."

But . . . "She keeps me going," says the grandmother. "I wouldn't walk to the corner store on a regular basis. I would not eat as well. I'd probably be big and fat! "My granddaughter is medicine for me. She's a little kid that needs help, and I'm an old lady that needs help. And for some reason, we were put together."

That is just like a grandparent to put a positive spin on things. God bless them.

matters of record

Real Estate

The following real estate transfers were reported by the Sherman County Register of Deeds:

Robert C. and Winona M. Parker to Thomas M. White the W100' of Lots 7 and 8 in Block 40, Beahm's Addition to the town, now city, of Goodland.

Joan Lamb, Rachael Taylor, Violet and Ed Phillips, Ramona and Jim Carver, Gloria and Tim Douglas and Patrick Lamb quit claims to Michael Lamb, 4200 Snowmass Dr., Arlington, Texas, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, Block 5, Original Town of Edson.

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Consignments must be in by March 5.

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