

## A Child-Size Scoop of Current Affairs

One way to help children make sense of the puzzling, and sometimes troubling, world is by encouraging their interest in current events. With a few activities centered around the news, parents can foster schoolchildren's natural curiosity—and give them a head start in social studies class at the same time.

Children's Express (CE) has educated children in current affairs since 1975. With offices in several major cities, this nonprofit children's news service gives kids 13 and under a chance to be news columnists and reporters, and publishes their articles in newspapers across the country. But even children who don't work for CE can follow the organization's suggestions for keeping up with current events. Robert Clampitt, the president of CE, has been inspiring young news hounds for years. He recommends the following simple projects to help a child develop an understanding of current affairs, and to show him how he has some connection—however small—to events in the world at large. Depending on your child's interest and your own enthusiasm for the news, you can make these projects as structured or as informal as you like, and adapt Clampitt's suggestions to your family's daily routine.

**Collecting the News.** As an introduction you can explain to your school-age child how the



*Children grow up surrounded by the news. Better to encourage their curiosity in current events than to screen them from the world.*

news is made by people all around the globe. First select a few stories that are relevant to his experience, such as those involving pets, other young children, or education. Take out a map or a globe and point to the regions where these events are taking place. If your youngster seems intrigued, you might help him start a scrapbook that could include clippings, photographs, and his own artwork or a list of questions that relate to the topics. Even preschool children can become familiar with certain issues by listening to you read the newspaper and explain the stories.

**Learning From Television.** Watching TV can become an interactive process if you sit with your child and talk about the broadcast. In addition to the

standard educational shows for children, take advantage of programs or videos that feature the topics he's following in the scrapbook, for instance, or other issues that parallel his interests. Older children might enjoy watching the local news, which spotlights places and people that they can recognize. You can also help put the national news into perspective. If the Secretary of Education is interviewed, for instance, explain to your child how the issues relate to his own elementary school.

**Asking Questions.** As your youngster begins to investigate world affairs, questions will naturally follow. And you can teach him basic analytical skills by encouraging him to ask "who, what, where, when, why, and how" about a news story or an event that he witnessed. Be prepared to help him use an encyclopedia or other reference materials to research questions that you can't answer. Parents can also encourage their child's enthusiasm with family discussions. The dinner hour, for instance, might be a good time to talk about a topic from your child's scrapbook or to introduce another newsworthy subject.

If you or your resident Ted Koppel wants more information about Children's Express and its guidelines for young reporters, send \$2.00 to: CE, 245 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001; (212) 620-0098. □

## CARE & FEEDING

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