



John Avery Boys and Girls Clubs, Inc. gave away toys before Christmas to area children. Some club members show off some the toys that were given away. From left to right are: Eric Allen, Jeffrey Price, Sean Laisure, Halle Hall, Hali Price, Kaila Rice and Latasha Garrett.

Student Rights Advocates Say New Database Violates Rights

By Makebra M. Anderson
NNPA National Correspondent
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The federal government's proposed plan to create a national registry that would track every college student is drawing fire from student rights advocates concerned about the possible violation of students' privacy.

"The United States Student Association (USSA) opposes the creation of this new database because it infringes upon student privacy rights," says Jasmine Harris, Legislative Director for USSA. "There are few protections offered for students under this proposal. They don't have the opportunity to opt out - even students who don't receive federal student aid."

Under the proposal, all colleges and universities would be required to provide data on all of its students, even those not receiving federal financial aid. The information gathered would include each student's Social Security number.

"There is already a tremendous amount of information out there that doesn't violate students rights policies," says Mike Bowler, director of Outreach and Communications for the Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the Department of Education. "If this comes to pass, there are going to be many safeguards to ensure that students' information is safe. For example, there will be no one person that will have access to the entire database."

The United States Education Department says this system would make it easier for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to measure college's performance and would provide more accurate statistics about retention and graduation rates.

"Right now all the states do it differently and there is a need for a unified system of data collecting," says Bowler. "With this database, we would know really for the first time exactly what graduation rates are. It would give policymakers information about higher education that is more accurate and make it easier for colleges to report data because they will have better information."

An estimated 15.9 million people were registered college students in 2002, according to the United States Census Bureau. The Bureau also reports that roughly 7.1 million full-time college students received some form of financial aid to help pay for their education that same year.

The USSA, a grassroots organization that tracks and lobbies for federal legislation and fights for student rights, agrees that the NCES

needs a better way of tracking student progress, but doesn't feel a federal registry is the best way to do it.

"NCES claims they would better be able to track students and what we're saying is that we know the graduation rates are inaccurate, but there are other ways to gain better information," says Harris. "They can't guarantee the information wouldn't be used for any other purpose than statistical analysis."

NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing educational data. The center collects, analyzes, and reports statistics on the condition of American education and claims it has never been required to share student information with other agencies.

At present, colleges and universities are required to report tuition, faculty salary averages, enrollment statistics and other data for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) established by the NCES. This is the core database used by the federal government to track trends in higher education.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) feels the current data system limits the ability to hold colleges accountable.

In a letter to Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio), chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and Howard McKeon (R-Calif.), chairman of the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Edward Elmendorf, senior vice president of Government Relations and Policy Analysis for AASCU writes.

"We believe, however, that the limitations of existing data systems prevent institutions from fully examining the progress of their students through the higher education system, and that current accountability systems fail to capture the full measure of student progress and success on our campuses. We further believe that if institutions are to be held truly accountable, better data are needed, and that the best way to accomplish this is through the development of a comprehensive national data collection strategy."

Changes to the current system would allow the Education Department to calculate the net price of tuition instead of relying on the price that colleges report. For the first time, it would also allow the department to track students who transfer from one college to another.

Although the NCES promises that sensitive information will be pro-

ected, the National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities (NAICU) still objects to its creation.

"Right now students have to give written consent for educational and personally identifiable data to be transferred out of the college. With this new proposal, most of that power is given to the federal government," explains Sarah Flanagan, the group's vice president for government relations. "It is a private action to enroll in college, especially if you don't get federal assistance, and a database like this could discourage college enrollment. Researchers are always going to want to know more. When does it stop?"

North Carolina Police Corps Holds Graduation Ceremony for 15 Officers

SALEMBURG — The North Carolina Police Corps graduated 15 trained police cadets on Dec. 17 at the North Carolina Justice Academy in Salemburg.

Michael Costigan, director of the Office of Police Corps and Law Enforcement Education, Washington, D.C. will deliver the keynote address.

Upon graduation, these new officers will perform community patrol for various law enforcement agencies throughout North Carolina and Virginia. North Carolina is one of 24 states and territories that recruit and train college graduates to serve four years as community police officers through a program funded by the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

"This graduation is the culmination of a rigorous 24-week training program that teaches the knowledge, skills and professional standards police officers need to serve on community patrol," said Bryan Beatty, secretary of the Dept. of Crime Control and Public Safety. "These outstanding young men and women have met high performance standards for physical, mental and emotional fitness, and I congratulate each of them on their achievement."

The Police Corps has a competitive college scholarship program for students who agree to work in a

To put this new system in place, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student education records, would have to be amended.

Under FERPA, established in 1974, parents and students "have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school and generally, schools must have written permission from the parents or eligible students in order to release any information from a student's education record."

Harris said, "It's hard to support this with all of the issues surrounding identity theft. Our biggest fear is that later down the road this database will be misused."

state or local police force for at least four years. Scholarship funds cover education expenses, including tuition, fees, books, supplies, transportation, room and board, and miscellaneous expenses.

The graduates of the North Carolina Police Corps program will join 11 North Carolina and Virginia law enforcement agencies. Those agencies include: Asheville Police Dept., Cary Police Dept., Dare County Sheriff's Office, East Carolina University Police Department, Fayetteville Police Dept., Garner Police Dept., Henderson Police Dept., Marion Police Dept., New Bern Police Dept., Waynesboro Police Dept., Winston-Salem Police Dept. These agencies will assign the new officers to community patrol within their jurisdictions.

The graduating Police Corps officers are: Christopher Ball of Hendersonville; Marc-Anthony Carmona of Statesville; Benjamin Deese of Willow Springs; Erin Ellerman of Greenville; George Jenkins of Raleigh; Marcus Kirk of Hope Mills; Virginia Laughlin of Montvale, VA; Nathan Lusk of Pembroke; George Moore, Jr. of Greenville; Ivan Pechtel of Winston-Salem; Justin Sasser of Hallsboro; Tiffany Silsbee of Cary; Joshua Smith of Kernersville; William Watson of White Lake; and Harry White, III of Plymouth.

Mixing Politics

(Continued From Page 14)

say their primary duty is to secure healthy return for funds toward the retirement incomes of 20 million public employees around the country - which amounts to some \$2 trillion. A pension fund is a savings plan set up and invested by an employer or a labor union to provide retirement income for workers. The funds accumulate income and capital gains tax-free which are used to pay benefits.

William Reed - www.BlackPressInternational.com

Ideas

(Continued From Page 14)

(The Louisiana Supreme Court voted to suspend the judge for six months and dock him \$50,000 in pay.)

Some seem to feel that issues of race and a commitment to tolerance and inclusion now can be pushed lower on the pecking order of the public agenda.

Certainly, the most bizarre example of this was the astonishing vote in November of a majority of Alabama's white electorate to keep language in the state's constitution mandating segregated schools "for white and colored children" along with language referring to the poll taxes that in the era of segregation were used to disenfranchise blacks.

This mean-spirited and pathetic clinging to the now-unused remnants of the anti-democratic regime of the Old South-some of which still litter several other southern state constitutions, too-contrasts in this season even more sharply to the vision for America the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s advocated: One in which the meaning of such words and phrases as freedom and justice and the pursuit of happiness are not limited to one class of Americans but are a living reality that applies to all.

Community

(Continued From Page 14)

blocks of community in general. Each day during Kwanzaa focuses on one of these principles and reminds celebrants to recommit to that value: Umoja (unity), to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race. Kujichagulia (self-determination), to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves. Ujima (collective work and responsibility), to build and maintain our community together and make our brothers and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together. Ujamaa (cooperative economics), to build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together. Nia (purpose), to make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness. Kuumba (creativity), to do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. And imani (faith), to believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Not everyone celebrates Kwanzaa, but these values contain some universal principles for building strong communities. Kwanzaa ends on New Year's Day in the Kwanzaa celebration, the Day of Meditation.

Many people already spend New Year's Day thinking about how they can resolve to improve themselves during the next year. But imagine if this year we all resolved to take steps to improve our communities instead. Imagine if every child in this nation were being raised in a community resolved to seeing any member's problems as everyone's problems and solving them together, or to making sure that all community members live together harmoniously and support each other in their common goals, or that every community decision would leave the community healthier and more beautiful tomorrow than it is today. What kinds of places would these communities be for our children-and, by extension, for all of us?

During a traditional Kwanzaa celebration muhindi, ears of corn, are laid on a mkeke, a straw mat. The mat symbolizes African peoples' history and traditions, and the corn symbolizes children and the future. Families place one ear of corn on the mkeke for each child in the household, but they're instructed to put at least two ears down even if they don't have children, because in African tradition every adult is considered a parent to every child in the community.

Many people talk about this belief, but imagine if every one of us really put it into action. And then imagine what kind of a world we could build for our children if our local, national, and global communities all committed to making it our most important community value.

During that final Day of Meditation in Kwanzaa, people are supposed to ask themselves three questions: "Who am I? Am I really who I say I am? And am I all I ought to be?" Everyone answers these questions as an individual, but their answers should reflect how well they are playing their part in making their community function as a whole and with justice. A person's success is deeply connected to how much value they are giving to others. At a time when our children desperately need adults to reweave the fabric of family and community for them, all of us need to think and ask ourselves these questions.

Are we all that we ought to be?

Marian Wright Edelman is President and Founder of the Children's Defense Fund and its Action Council, whose Leave No Child Behind mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.