



"When an Apple
A Day
Isn't Enough"

*Students in
KANSAS
Speak Out
About Health Care*

Campaign for Children's Health Care
April 2007

Excerpted from
“When an Apple a Day Isn’t Enough”
Students Speak Out about Health Care Coverage

Campaign for Children’s Health Care

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To obtain the complete book of essays, e-mail your request to
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Introduction

The Campaign for Children's Health Care is dedicated to making high-quality, affordable health coverage for all of America's children a top national priority. We are a diverse group of organizations who represent health care providers, educators, parents, advocates, and others, all of whom share a commitment to our nation's children. The campaign coordinates public education efforts across the country to demonstrate the importance of health insurance for children and families and to show why national action is needed to expand coverage for children.

More than 9 million children lack health insurance in the United States, the wealthiest nation in the world, and millions more are underinsured. Investing in children's health returns innumerable benefits, including improved development and health, improved school performance, and long-term savings in health care costs. We believe it is time for our leaders to take action.

More information about the campaign's activities and partner organizations is available online at www.childrenshealthcampaign.org. In addition to the essay contest, the campaign is sponsoring a petition to make children's health coverage a national priority. By signing the petition, people are calling on the President and Congress to begin work immediately on legislation that will provide comprehensive, affordable, high-quality health coverage for all children. To join the campaign, sign the petition, and learn more about the importance of children's health coverage, go to our Web site at www.childrenshealthcampaign.org.



Who Are America's Uninsured Children?

- About one in every eight American children has no health insurance—that's 9,157,000 children.
- If all of America's uninsured children held hands, they would stretch 6,936 miles—two-and-a-half times the distance from San Francisco to Washington, D.C.
- The majority of uninsured children—78 percent—live in working families.
- Children in low-income families are significantly more likely to be uninsured than those in higher-income families.
- Although more white children are uninsured, minority children are at greater risk of being uninsured.

Six Good Reasons Why All Children Should Have Health Insurance

1 Children with insurance are more likely to have a usual source of care.

- Children with insurance are eight times more likely to have a usual source of care.
- In 2003, uninsured children were 2.7 times more likely than insured children not to have seen a health care provider in the previous 12 months.

2 Children with insurance are more likely to have access to preventive care.

- Children in public programs are one-and-one-half times more likely to obtain well-child care than uninsured children.
- In 2003, uninsured children were more than twice as likely to have gone without a preventive care visit in the past year as insured children.

3 Children with insurance get the health care services they need.

- Uninsured children are 10 times more likely to have an unmet health care need than insured children.

4 Insuring children will help close the racial disparities gap.

- Among African American children, those who are uninsured are 20 times more likely to forgo needed medical care.
- Among Hispanic children, those who are uninsured are 10 times more likely to forgo needed medical care.

5 Health insurance helps improve social and emotional development.

- Uninsured children are nearly one-and-a-half times more likely to have missed a hearing screening than children who are insured.
- Uninsured children are also almost one-and-a-half times more likely to have missed a vision screening than children who are insured.

6 Insured children are better equipped to do well in school.

- Uninsured children with poorly controlled chronic diseases like asthma can suffer poor academic performance if their health condition causes them to miss many days of school. For example, children miss more than 14 million days of school each year because of asthma.
- Insurance improves children's access to the medications and treatment they need to control chronic diseases, allowing them to miss fewer days of school.

Expanding Children's Health Coverage

Two public programs—the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid—have significantly expanded health coverage for children and improved the care they receive. These programs provide a strong foundation we can build on to expand coverage to uninsured children.

SCHIP covers more than 4 million children, the majority of whom would otherwise be uninsured. (The SCHIP program is known by different names in different states. In Kansas, it is called *HealthWave*.) It bridges the gap between Medicaid and private insurance, offering uninsured children in near-poor and moderate-income families affordable health coverage. SCHIP also plays an important role in reducing disparities in minority children's access to health care.

The SCHIP program will expire in 2007 unless it is renewed by Congress and the President. In order to strengthen and build on the success of this important program, Congress must provide sufficient funding to make sure that the children who are currently enrolled in SCHIP do not lose their coverage. Just as importantly, Congress should provide funds to reach out and expand coverage to children who are eligible for the program but not enrolled.

About the Essay Contest

The Campaign for Children’s Health Care sponsored this national essay contest, “When an Apple a Day Isn’t Enough,” to generate awareness among America’s youth about the importance of providing health coverage to all young people. We asked students aged nine to 18 to answer the following questions:

- For students aged 9-13: Many children and young people get sick or hurt and need to go to the hospital or see the doctor. Write one paragraph about a time when you or a friend were helped by a doctor. Then, write a second paragraph about why it is important for all children to be able to see a doctor.
- For students aged 14-18: In the United States, more than 9 million people under the age of 19 do not have health insurance. You or someone in your community may not have health insurance. Describe in the first person a teenager or child with no health insurance and explain how the lack of health insurance affects that person’s life. If you do not know someone without health insurance, imagine how not having health insurance can be a struggle.

The campaign recognizes that the voices of children should be represented in the national debate on the future of children’s health coverage in the United States. We were thrilled when more than 4,500 students from across the nation took the time to be part of this debate. By submitting their essays, these students provided the campaign with a unique and profound perspective on how health coverage makes a difference in people’s lives. The thousands of essays we received were passionate, well-articulated, and well-researched. And, as a group, they represent the views of families from all locations, socioeconomic levels, races and ethnicities, and political parties.

Again and again, these essays emphasized that our nation’s families, especially children, need help finding affordable, quality health insurance. As you will see in the essays presented in this book, our nation’s children, both the uninsured and the underinsured, are paying the price in our broken health care system.

The original publication is a compilation of essays from the grand prize winners, as well as the state winners from each age category. To preserve the integrity of the essays, we made minimal spelling and grammatical changes. The overall message and content of the essays are presented in their original form.

It is our hope that these essays will inform state and federal lawmakers about the urgent need to provide coverage to our nation’s youth. The young people in America have contributed their voice and their views to this dialogue. Now, it is time for us to listen.

Kansas Winners

Ages 9 to 13:

Darian Sanner

Age 10, Grade 5

Topeka, Kansas

Ages 14 to 18:

Kelsi Hilbrant-Head

Age 17, Grade 12

Manhattan, Kansas

Darian Sanner

Age 10, Grade 5
Topeka, Kansas

Last year on Sept. 12, 2005 my grandpa had a liver transplant. He had been sick for a very long time. There were a lot of different Doctors that did the operation. The operation took about 6 hours and my grandpa was in the hospital for 15 days. I am thankful for doctors, because they helped my grandpa when he was very, very sick. That is how a doctor helped my family.

I feel it is important that all children be able to see a doctor. Being healthy is very important. It is important to have a family doctor, because he knows you best, also because the doctor knows about your health history, so he can fix you. There are different doctors you should see there is a dentist, eye doctor, and family doctor. If your child sees all these doctors it will help them to live a happier life. That's why it is important for all children to see a doctor.



Kelsi Hillbrant-Head

Age 17, Grade 12

Manhattan, Kansas

I go to high school, I wear normal clothes, and I have my own car. The one thing I do not have is health insurance. My parents' companies no longer offer family health insurance. Their personal health insurance is useless unless they are critically injured because the deductible is so high. While my family income does not lie below the poverty level, health insurance for a family of five is incredibly expensive and we do not qualify for the free state health insurance. Where does this leave us? Are we to go along living in the United States of America and not be able to take care of ourselves?

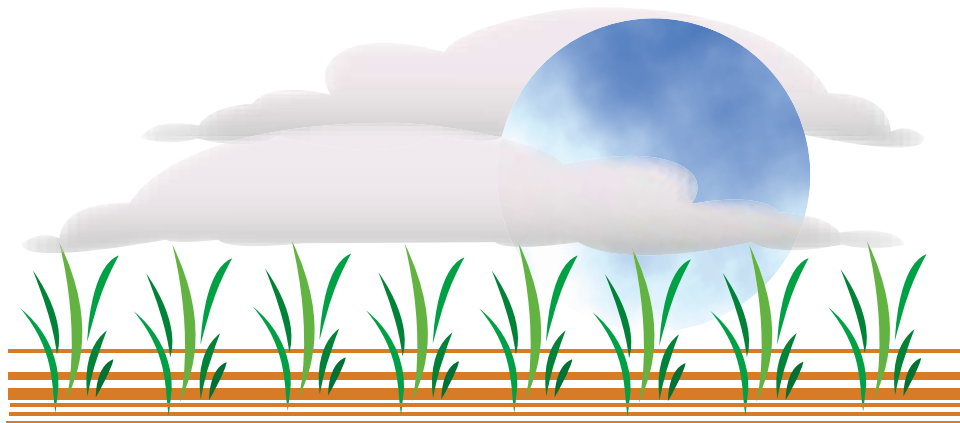
My friends talk of their various health appointments but I have nothing to say. I can't describe the waiting room music or the smell of the dentist's office because I haven't been in five years. My parents never deny my siblings or myself a visit to the doctor but we know how stressful the financial burden can become. The last time I got sick, my parents received a bill for \$250. Multiply that times three or even five and the total can be a strain on any income level.



My family's lack of insurance is always in the back of everyone's mind. A cough, runny nose, or headache puts the whole family on alert. The weeks before school starts cause us all to stock up on vitamin C and hand sanitizer. We stood in line for two hours last year awaiting flu shots that we never received. My parents can't be faulted for lack of effort to prevent illness however, a family cannot avoid every illness.

I worry how my family would handle a more serious ailment. What if I get in a car wreck and needed major surgery. Today, two minutes after I left an intersection, there was a three car accident. What if I had been just two minutes later? How would my family pay the medical bills? What if my younger sister falls and breaks her arm? Of course all of these are hypothetical situations but in only an instant they can become reality.

Although I appear perfectly normal, the rising costs of health care have a serious impact on my life. Countless radio, television, and news stories illustrate the escalating crisis healthcare has become. My family is in constant fear of any kind of illness and we are not even the most underprivileged citizens. If faced with multiple health care bills, my family would be in distress. The United States has the best healthcare available but does quality matter if no one can afford it?



Our Partners

Campaign for Children's Health Care

AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth and Families
Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Association on Mental Retardation
American Federation of State, County, and
Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Medical Student Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Public Health Association
Appleseed
Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and
Neonatal Nurses
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Catholic Health Initiatives
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
The Children's Health Fund
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