



"When an Apple
A Day
Isn't Enough"

*Students in
NEBRASKA
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 Nebraska, it is called *Nebraska Kids Connection*.) 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.

🌀 Nebraska Winner 🌀

Ages 14 to 18:
BrieAnna Jasnoch
Age 18, Grade 12
Oshkosh, Nebraska

BrieAnna Jasnoch

Age 18, Grade 12

Oshkosh, Nebraska

At the age of fourteen, my brother was diagnosed with leukemia, a cancer caused when immature cells accumulate in the blood and within organs of the body, disabling them to carry out their main functions. My family did not have health insurance. Every day, I had to watch my brother suffer from several symptoms that come with leukemia. Small symptoms took over first and eventually accumulated into multiple symptoms that took over his life. He started with fevers and night sweats, and eventually wasted away to nothing from severe weight loss. Dustin became short of breath, confused, and spent a lot of time in the bathroom vomiting. Eventually, as bad as it sounds, it just became a normal occurrence to see him suffer.



For two years my family struggled to afford treatment for my brother's ill conditions. With the little income that my father brought in off the farm and the amount of time that my mother had to take off from work to chauffeur my brother around, there was barely enough money to put food on our table. Life wasn't coming easy for our family and there were numerous problems accumulating on top of Dustin's illness, because of our family's severe debt.

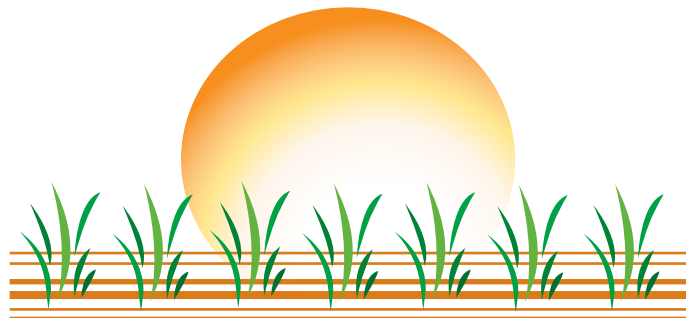
Three years before my brothers' diagnosis, life was wonderful. We had a very close knit family that kept nothing from each other. We enjoyed family vacations, and evenings around the dinner table, Christmas at Grandma's house, and Thanksgiving at our uncles. Money wasn't a problem for us; dad owned his own farm, had a trucking business, and also ground bales for local residents living around us. Mom worked as a Certified Nurses Assistant at our small nursing home and brought in a fair amount of cash. We all drove nice vehicles, had nice things, and wore brand name clothing. I guess you could say that we lived the all American life. The only thing we didn't have was health insurance. It's amazing what those two words can amount to.

On November 1, 2001 my brother gave up his fight to leukemia. I do my best to remember the good times we had, the places we went, and the laughs we shared with each other, but I can't help but wonder what the outcome would have been if we were able to afford the proper treatment for him. Even if it is true that his fate was laid out for him from the beginning, maybe, if we were able to supply him with the proper medications, he would have been able to enjoy just one more day in class without his headaches tormenting him, one more Christmas at Granny's, or one more Thanksgiving at Uncle Craig's.

One in nine American children aren't supplied with health insurance. They're more susceptible to early illnesses, and have a better chance of being hospitalized for something that was very much preventable. Sick children are less apt to learn, and less apt to participate in important activities.

My brother loved football, and was looked upon by fellow students and even adults for his dedication to the sport, but his time on the field was cut short when he was diagnosed with leukemia. I can't help but wonder what my brother would have accomplished if his time here wasn't cut so short and that if we did have health insurance, would he have had the chance to pursue his goals?

Tomorrow will be my brother's five-year anniversary since his death, and seven-year anniversary since his diagnosis. Not only that, but our second round in high school football playoffs takes place tomorrow. I can only dream what Dustin would be accomplishing on that field and only wonder if maybe our decisions would have been different seven years ago, and we had applied for health insurance, then maybe I'd be able to watch him on that field.



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
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Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
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Catholic Health Initiatives
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