

WORLD & NATION

Leaders in public health condemn media violence

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The leaders of four of America's major public health organizations took a stand against violence in media July 26 at a congressional summit on entertainment violence.

"Well over 1,000 studies," they said, "point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children."

This evidence, they added, goes against claims made by some in the entertainment industry that "violent programming is harmless because no studies exist that prove a connection between violent entertainment and aggressive behavior in children" and that "young people know that television, movies, and video games are simply fantasy."

"Unfortunately, they are wrong on both counts," they said.

The statement was signed by Dr. E. Rattle Anderson Jr., executive vice president of the American Medical Association; Dr. Donald F. Cook, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Dr. Clarice Kestenbaum, president of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; and T. Michael Honaker, deputy chief executive officer of the American Psychological Association.

"The conclusion of the public health community, based on over 30 years of research, is that viewing entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values and behavior, particularly in children," they said. "Its effects are measurable and long-lasting."

Some findings that turn up repeatedly in research, they said, show that:

- Children who see a lot of violence are more likely to view violence as an effective way of settling conflicts. Children exposed to violence are more likely to assume that acts of violence are acceptable behavior.

- Viewing violence can lead to emotional desensitization towards violence in real life. It can decrease the likelihood that one will take action on behalf of a victim when violence occurs.

- Entertainment violence feeds a perception that the world is a violent and mean place. Viewing violence increases fear of becoming a victim of violence, with a resultant increase in self-protective behaviors and a mistrust of others.

- Viewing violence may lead to real-life violence. Children exposed to violent programming at a young age have a higher tendency for violent and aggressive behavior later in life than children not so exposed.

"We do hope that by articulating and releasing the consensus of the public health

community, we may encourage greater public and parental awareness of the harms of violent entertainment, and encourage a more honest dialogue about what can be done to enhance the health and well-being of America's children," they said.

Their concern echoes that of the U.S. bishops in their 1998 statement, "Renewing the Mind of the Media."

"It is not so much the portrayal of violence that is wrong but its misuse, which makes it an end in itself and draws either no consequences or the wrong ones from it. Once again, what may not be objectionable for some may not be at all suitable to others such as children and young people," the bishops said.

"One factor that makes this issue especially urgent today is the extreme violence of our society, particularly the degree to which many young people resort to violence," they added in their 1998 document.

"We do not allege that watching a violent movie or playing a violent game predetermines that a child will become violent," said Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., one of the summit's hosts.

"This statement is simply an encapsulation of common sense: What we see, hear, and experience shapes our attitudes, our assumptions, and our perspective, which in turn, affects our behavior," he added.

Brownback said he was not out to tell Hollywood what it could or could not do. But with many U.S. children exposed to TV, movies, video games and other entertainment for 30 hours each week, he said, "the public has the right to know the truth about the public health risks and dangers."



Alesha M. Price/CNS

Tent revival

Willis Joseph calls a congregation to worship on the djembe drum of Guinea during a weekend tent revival in June in Charlotte, N.C.

NBC newsman credits Catholic educators

BALTIMORE (CNS) — Former Catholic schoolboy "little Timmy Russert" has heartfelt thanks for the Catholic school teachers who "changed my life."

Russert, Washington bureau chief of NBC News and moderator of the weekly program "Meet the Press," was the first keynote speaker at the National Catholic Educational Association convention, where more than 10,000 Catholic educators gathered in April.

Recalling his years at Canisius High School in Buffalo and John Carroll University in Cleveland, Russert said his father, a sanitation worker who never finished high school, "worked two jobs all his life so his four kids could go to Catholic school, and those schools changed my life."

In high school, "Sister Mary Lucille

founded a school newspaper and appointed me editor and changed my life," he added. Teachers in Catholic schools "taught me to read and write, but also how to tell right from wrong."

Russert said the fate of our children is "the most important economic, national security and moral issue facing our country today."

Noting that a child born to an unmarried woman who has not finished high school has an 80 percent likelihood of living in poverty but a child born into a two-parent, high-school-educated family only has an 8 percent chance, he called for a national campaign "to convince our children to finish school, get a job, get married and then have a baby, in that order."

"You do change lives, and I have no

doubt you have saved lives," Russert told the educators. "The secret of your success is that you believe in something — in your God, your values, yourselves, your students."

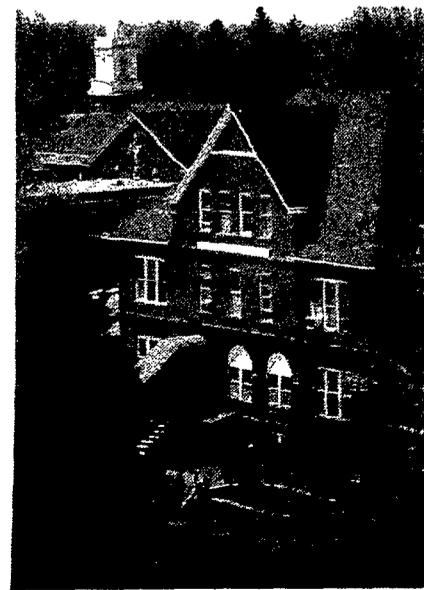
"People like your students will make a difference in this country and this world."

Catholic schools work against the notion that "success is only for the wealthy or the Ivy League," Russert said. He added that Catholic school teachers work to convince all students "that their families, their values and their Catholic school education have prepared them for the challenges of life as well as any other person in America."

Russert also entertained his audience with anecdotes related to his 1984 coup as executive in charge of the "Today" show in obtaining an on-air interview with Pope John Paul II. When executive producer Steve Friedman told him to "get the pope," Russert said he told him, "Steve, I used to be an altar boy, but there are a few steps in between."

Now More Than Ever.

Christian leaders need a strong foundation to provide wisdom, comfort, and spiritual guidance to a troubled world.



NORTHEASTERN
Seminary

at Roberts Wesleyan College

is helping women and men establish that strong academic & spiritual foundation for contemporary Christian service.

Call 1-800-777-4792

for information about our innovative schedule for completing an accredited Master of Divinity or Master of Arts degree.

"Rooted in the authority of Scriptures and the Classical Christian Faith."

2301 Westside Drive, Rochester, NY 14624-1997

www.nes.edu Seminary@roberts.edu

1-800-777-4792 1-716-594-6800

The Amenities of Home, The Luxury of a Resort

LUXURIOUS 1 & 2 BEDROOM
OVERSIZED APARTMENT HOMES
FOR THE ACTIVE LIFESTYLE 55+

Mon.-Fri. 9-5
Sat. & Sun. 11-4
510 De George Circle
Georgetown Park
Professionally Managed by DBI Properties

255-4480 EHO

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol.
111 No. 43, August 3, 2000

Published weekly except the last
Thursday in December.

Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624; 716/326-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.