

Obesity & education

How much one weighs can affect college plans

A national study indicates that obese high school girls are less likely to attend college than their contemporaries.

"Obesity has been identified as a serious public health issue, but these results indicate the harmful effects extend far beyond physical health," says Robert Crosnoe, author of the study and a sociologist at the University of Texas-Austin. The study was published in *Sociology of Education*, which tracked 11,000 American teens. Data was used from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

Self-image is a huge criteria for making the decision not to advance to college, the study indicates. Obese girls seem more likely to consider committing suicide, and sometimes abuse alcohol and marijuana, hardly life choices that will push them into higher education. Those girls most at-risk were non-white, whose parents did not attend or graduate from college.

Obese boys did not differ from their non-obese peers in college enrollment. This would suggest that body image is much more pronounced with girls than with boys. ○



Ripple Kid of the Month

This monthly nomination is about the act of giving back. An Orange County nonprofit, Ripple Kids, Inc., features youth who are changing their community via a "ripple effect."

We ask parents and schools to nominate these contributors, ages 13 and under. Please contact founder Bridget Belden, who is blogging about children making a difference, at ripplekids.ocfamily.com. This month's selection is Mason, 7, of Tustin. Read about him online at ocfamily.com. ○



familytech

No shame Child identity theft

Parents have to worry about more than just themselves when it comes to identity theft. Children are targets, too. They account for 10% of all identity theft.

It seems preposterous, but thieves can use any Social Security number, regardless of age. Credit bureaus do not have checks and balances. When someone turns in an application, they do not run a background check to confirm the information. A 40-year-old male can use a 5-year-old child's Social Security number, no problem.

Probably the most common areas for identity theft are doctors' offices, dentists' offices and daycares. Typically, they do not encrypt client records, making it a perfect place for thieves to attack. They can break into offices and steal massive amounts of information. Another hot spot for identity theft is, of course, the Internet. Children are lackadaisical with personal information and can easily set themselves up for an attack.

Todd Davis, CEO of Lifelock, says, "Social networking sites are the most dangerous. Someone might ask, 'Where were you born?' or, 'Do you have a pet?' They don't really care about that stuff. What they are doing is probing you; they are trying to figure out how to break into your password."

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