

LOCAL NEWS



Students practice quake drill

Children at the Manuel Fernández Juncos School in Juana Díaz get under their desks as part of a drill of what to do in case of an earthquake. The drill was sponsored by the Seismic Network of Puerto Rico as part of their educational campaign to prepare citizens in the eventuality of a major tremor hitting the island.

Photo special to the STAR by Gary Gutiérrez

Experts: Community programs helping lower youth crime rate

By LORRAINE BLASOR BRANDARIZ
Of the STAR Staff

Community involvement with young people at risk is helping lower youth crime but experts at a conference on Tuesday cautioned of the importance of continuing these efforts as the youth population booms in coming years.

Jack Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Violence and Social Conflict at Boston's Northeastern University, said juvenile delinquency, including murder, is going down in the states and he credited the improvement on a "grass roots revolution" whereby police, clergy, businesses and schools, especially, are helping youths at risk.

These programs are giving youth the "supervision, structure, guidance and hope" they so desperately need but must be emulated by more communities, he said at a conference on youth delinquency.

Citing specific examples, Levin said the city of Boston, Mass. is helping keep youths out of trouble by

creating as many as 10,000 summer jobs. The city also set up an alternative school program for 6,000 youths expelled for weapons possession.

Commenting on television's impact on youth, Levin suggested that instead of worrying about what kids are watching, parents should be more concerned about "who is watching the kids."

Tuesday's conference was held in connection with the Second Hispanic Congress of Allied Health Professions, which begins today and runs until Friday. The Congress is expected to draw 350 allied health professionals from Puerto Rico, the United States and other countries, according to Estela Estapé, dean of the University of Puerto Rico College of Allied Health Professionals, which is sponsoring the event. Health professionals include speech pathologists, medical technicians and physical therapists, among others.

Nicolás Linares, director of the Rehabilitation Initiatives Office at the University of Puerto Rico, said

in an aside that school desertion, child abuse, exposure to violence in the media and access to guns are considered important factors in promoting violence and Puerto Rico, he said, has all of these conditions.

Still there are successful ways of dealing with youth crime and these include working closely with families at risk and helping young mothers boost their parenting skills, according to Linares. Yet too few of these programs are available in Puerto Rico, he said.

Estapé said the issue of youth crime is relevant in that "it is one of the main problems affecting the health of our people." Health, she said, can't be seen solely in physical terms as it also involves emotional and spiritual aspects and a person's interplay with the community.

The three-day congress, which is being held at the Caribe Hilton Hotel, will focus on health promotion and prevention which, according to Estapé will be at the basis of medicine in the 21st century.

Relief fund set up here to help quake victims

By EVA LLORENS VELEZ
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The Colombian Consulate in Puerto Rico has opened up a bank account to collect donations for victims of Monday's powerful earthquake across the western part of Colombia.

In addition, Civil Defense Director Epifanio Jiménez

Armenia, a city of 220,000 residents where entire neighborhoods were reduced to rubble and left without water or electricity, the Associated Press reported.

Colombia's Consul in Puerto Rico, Luis Felipe Suárez Williamson, requested monetary donations because of the high cost of shipping clothing and food.

Local donations can be deposited in Banco Popular's account number 024123110, also known as Colombia's Relief to Earthquake Victims.