

## Anyone can be rich and famous

By NED CANTWELL

Rio Rancho Observer, July 5, 2006  
Deming Headlight, July 5, 2006  
Ruidoso News, July 6, 2006  
Los Alamos Monitor, July 6, 2006  
Clovis News Journal, July 6, 2006  
Farmington Daily News, July 9, 2006

New Mexico Voices for Children released survey data compiled by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Before you digest this information, understand this is a prestigious foundation. It's the real deal.

Here is what the foundation's 2006 Kids Count findings have to say about New Mexico:

New Mexico continues to rank toward the bottom of the 50 states when it comes to the health and well being of our kids. We rank 48th overall, down from 46th last year. We beat Louisiana and Mississippi. That's something, at least.

Our state is near the bottom of the rankings in many of the benchmark areas where child welfare is measured. We rank absolutely last among the states in the percentage of kids who live in "working poor" families. But a bright light, for those looking for a glass to be half-full: New Mexico climbed to 35th among the states in the percent of children who live in extreme poverty.

Bottom line: New Mexico needs to do a better job of taking care of its kids, their nutritional needs, their emotional needs, their health, and their housing. Not an easy task.

News from Los Angeles:

Aaron Spelling died. He was 83 and once a creative genius in the television business. He dreamed up more than 200 television series and movies.

Among Spelling's legendary productions were SWAT, T.J. Hooker, Family, Love Boat, Fantasy Island, Dynasty, Melrose Place. The list goes on and on.

Spelling made a ton of money. He traveled with a uniformed butler, owned a railroad car, and his house in the Holmby Hills section of Los Angeles had 56,000 square feet of space containing 123 rooms. The two Spelling kids had their own bowling alley and their own ice rink.

I was not particularly bothered by the fact the each Spelling child had 28,000 feet of his own when typical poor New Mexico kids cram into three or four cramped rooms. No, what caught my attention the day I read the Spelling obit, the same day I read the New Mexico child poverty story, is this: Every December, Spelling would have snow trucked to Los Angeles so his kids could have a White Christmas. Well, la de da.

Bottom line: That's OK. What every poor New Mexico child needs to know is that we live in a wonderful country where any child, no matter her race or heritage, no matter how humble his beginnings, can grow up to be rich and famous and have snow trucked in for the children. That's the message we need to remember, especially in the afterglow of our glorious July 4 celebration.

On the other hand, would any New Mexican be terribly upset if one of our poor kids, a kid without proper housing or food, might have peed in that snow before they trucked it to Los Angeles?

News from New York:

Writing in the New York Times, Anna Bernasek says:

"Inequality has always been part of the American economy, but the gap between rich and poor has recently

been widening at an alarming rate. Today, more than 40 percent of total income is going to the wealthiest 10 percent, their biggest share of the nation's pie in at least 65 years."

Bottom line: What do our readers think of all this?

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