

This week ExxonMobil is donating its space to the Harvard School of Public Health's Kids Risk Project

Children are our present

The holidays bring families together and generate a whole new bustle of activity. But they also bring an opportunity to reflect about the year that flew by too quickly and to look forward to the year to come.

This year, as I think about children unwrapping presents, playing with the hottest toys and trying out the “in” looks, I realize that we should all think about the most valuable gifts that we can give them, not only during the holidays but all year round.

Especially I think of their health and well-being. Nothing they can unwrap during the holidays can possibly come close to the importance of their healthy development, safety and education. And although no one likes to think about kids being hurt or sick, the truth is that they face very real risks.

At the Kids Risk Project, our goal is to empower everyone to make better and more-informed decisions to manage children's risks and to improve their lives. We look at each child as a whole person, cross disciplines and bridge the gaps created by the currently fragmented responsibility for kids. We bring the latest research to the forefront. We remind parents that all entertainment media educate, whether intended or not. We contribute to ensuring that the business community and the government

make good decisions and invest in kids.

We elevate safety into an everyday priority, and in the year ahead, we'll teach thousands of kids to be risk detectives, and we'll reach millions of parents with good information about children's risks.

Starting with caring and commitment, we see the first step as spreading awareness of the need to focus on the risks to kids and the benefits of finding effective ways to manage them.

Just before the year 2000, the second-graders at a school assembly presented their wishes for the new millennium. Amidst all of the wishes for dogs and gadgets, and several hopes for world peace, one child wished

“that people would stop making bad choices.” This wish still inspires and motivates the Kids Risk Project, and the more kids we talk with, the more optimistic we become about the future. Increasingly, it's time to find more ways to connect with children, hear their voices and help them make good choices.

They have so much to give, and they truly are our present.

Dr. Kimberly M. Thompson
*Harvard School of Public Health
Director, Kids Risk Project*

For more information, please visit our Web site at: www.kidsrisk.harvard.edu

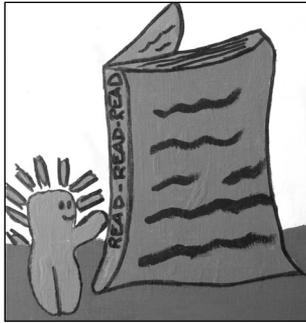


Image by Mei Xian Zheng