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The Miami Herald

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May 26, 1996 Sunday FINAL EDITION

A STAND FOR CHILDREN

BYLINE: Herald Staff

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Pg. 2L

LENGTH: 320 words

By taking a stand, they are taking responsibility. On June 1, thousands of advocates from across the country will converge on Washington to Stand for Children. South Floridians will be among them.

Organized by the Children's Defense Fund, the Stand for Children is neither partisan nor political. Its cause is, however, vitally important to the nation's future.

"Advocates," really, is a tepid, institutional description that doesn't get to the flesh and blood of this gathering. Parents, teachers, doctors, clergy, and leaders of scouting and business will be there. All are alarmed at how much the quality of too many children's lives has deteriorated.

Marian Wright Edelman, head of the Children's Defense Fund, says it succinctly: "We will transcend our differences and affirm what unites us as a people: a loving desire to raise moral, healthy, and educated children; a sense of fairness; and a belief that in the richest and most powerful nation on Earth, no child should be left behind."

It is a message that resonates in South Florida, for there are a lot of children at risk of being left behind -- with little chance of catching up. The reasons are many: Neglect, abuse, poverty, crime, inattentive or absent parents, and, in Congress nowadays, strong forces willing to cut programs that benefit children.

Some families are their own worst enemies -- and children sometimes bear the brunt. Guns these days solve too many arguments, and children get caught in the cross fire. And neither is their health and welfare guaranteed if they are the children of affluence.

There are no politicians scheduled to speak at the Stand for Children. Clearly, though, they will be spoken to. They and a concerned nation must pay heed.

* For more information call, in Dade, the Children's Services Council, 633-6481, Ext. 213, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. In Broward, call Children First, 236-4111, 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m.

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