

READING EAGLE

December 2, 2008

State of Our Nation's Youth Survey Economic concerns lessen optimism

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Each year the Horatio Alger Association surveys teens between the ages of 13 to 19 in the State of Our Nation's Youth survey. This study gives attention to the issues and feelings of the teens of America. Within the survey, the students are asked a variety of questions regarding everything from their feelings on the economy and the future of the country, to whom they consider their personal role models.

This survey allows the greatly underestimated youth of America to voice their opinion and speak their minds about what they think can be done to improve the country and the world they live in.

In the 2003-2004 State of Our Nation's Youth survey, 75 percent of students said that they were very optimistic about the future of the economy and the country. However, in this year's 2008-2009 survey, that number fell 22 points, to barely half (50 percent) of the students seeing a bright future for the country.

Twin Valley junior Chantel Duriez is not very optimistic about the future economy.

She said, "The politicians currently running the country are creating the mess that we are going to have to deal with later. What they are doing now may have a small effect on them, but we are the ones who are going to have to deal with the long-term effects later."

One of the big concerns on everyone's mind lately is the state of our economy, and the students between 6th and 12th grade are no exception. When asked what the most important issue would be if they were deciding for whom to vote for in the presidential election, 34 percent of students chose jobs and the economy as a deal breaker, with the war in Iraq coming in a close second with 31 percent of student votes.

"Jobs and economy are definitely at the top of the list," Twin Valley junior Josiah Boyer said. "It's our future at stake, and it's important to preserve it."

As an expected result, 41 percent of all seniors polled agree that the economy and jobs are the most important issues to think about, as this problem becomes more of a reality as graduation nears.

This is in contrast to the 27 percent of freshmen choosing economy and jobs. For them, the issue of dealing with the falling economy is still in the distant future.

An over-whelming 75 percent of teens said they cared about the outcome of the election and agree that it will make a large difference in the direction of the economy and other important issues.

However, according to the survey, only about 12 percent of students actually followed the election closely these past few months, with 24 percent not following the election at all.

Twin Valley junior Devin Shingle said, "People who say they care, but don't actually know what they're caring about, are very pretentious. Trying to keep up an appearance as someone who knows what is going on just really makes them look stupid."

Teens' overall pessimism about the country's direction in years to come is said to be greatly reliant on the next elected president. However, the survey reveals a noticeable trend that many of the issues teens feel are important echo the strong feelings that their parents have expressed as well.

"I think that your parents influence your decision a lot," Twin Valley junior Chelsea Murray said. "When you talk about the country and the economy with them, they voice their opinion, and it stays with you. You eventually form your own opinion based on their thoughts."

Regardless of any opinions you may have, it's important to voice your thoughts, and show what issues are on your mind. We are the future of this country, and if we don't speak up now, we may never get the chance. We are strong, intelligent, and can accomplish anything.

Regarding the survey, the Horatio Alger Association issued a statement that offers hope: "Yet despite these anxieties, what emerges here is a portrait of a generation who believe in themselves and their abilities. Their pessimism about the country's future is matched by optimism for their own futures, with the confidence to combat any challenges they face on the road to adulthood."

(Lindsey Smith is a junior at Twin Valley High School.)



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