

California

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UC addresses challenges to the California family

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We are all members of a family, and our knowledge of family structure and function is strongly influenced by personal experience. In fact, our families are so basic and familiar, guiding our earliest initiation into social life, that we frequently overlook their fundamental contribution to the viability of our economy and society.

Diverse groups use similar words and phrases to characterize families; however, we do not have a common scientific base or understanding of that language. This dilemma is perhaps best illustrated by the public debates in which the term 'family values' is used to convey a political agenda, with the agenda varying by the group using the term. By recognizing the United Nations' International Year of the Family, we can raise the level of discussion about the function of families in society and recognize the knowledge needed to support this vital unit. We also have the opportunity to focus on California's unique human resources — their diversity and their multiple modes of problem solving. These efforts will only be successful if the Year of the Family is seen as the beginning of a constructive dialogue, not simply a commemorative event.

When the land grant university system was established in 1862, the majority of Americans were involved in family farm

duction, how to provide for their children's health and education, whether both parents should work outside the home, and which foods and clothes to buy. Family decisions may or may not promote functional communities that protect the health and welfare of members. If society gave greater consideration to the family impact of institutions and policies, the community as a whole would benefit by allowing each of us to fulfill our family roles.

The contributors to this special issue provide insight into how programs that relate to families are integrated into UC's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. For many years, the disciplines of production agriculture and those concerned with agricultural consumption were viewed as discrete entities. Today we recognize they are parts of a continuum. Shelter, food and clothing are fundamental needs of individuals and families. Child care, health promotion and youth development are critical components affecting the quality of life of all individuals and families. The sustainability of both UC and the state's agricultural enterprise depends upon our ability to respond to the needs and interests of individuals in the context of family life.

Furthermore, if we agree that families are the fundamental

SPECIAL ISSUE: Year of the Family

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Hethorn

The connection between clothing symbols and violence has led some school districts to impose dress codes aimed at eliminating gang-related clothing. The author suggests finding new ways of addressing this problem.

COVER: In California, 13% suffer from stark hunger; 57% of single mothers and one in four children live below the poverty line. —*Photo by Suzanne Paisley*

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California has led the nation in total farm production every year since 1948. Yet the ranks of the hungry are growing in California — especially among young children. The irony has prompted growers and other citizens to establish food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens, extraordinary efforts that still fall short of the need.

Research tells us that when poverty and chronic hunger affect young children, the repercussions are felt by society for years to come. As the International Year of the Family

comes to a close, we look at the complex reasons for persistent poverty as well as other critical issues affecting the California family. We begin by taking stock of the challenges facing the state, then explore some innovative solutions, ranging from nutrition programs and food relief to construction of farmworker housing and development of youth programs. We also look at factors affecting child development: the working mother, child care, treatment of child abuse, and the role of gang clothing in teenage self-expression. —Ed.