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**Our View**

# Poor trend

Escalating poverty demands attention.

The latest **KIDS COUNT** report — an annual look at key indicators on child health and well-being — showed more alarming results in Finney County and beyond.

Among the troubling trends was the number of children living in poverty throughout Kansas, which climbed from 12 percent in 2000 to 15 percent — about 100,000 youngsters — in 2008.

The trend was more disturbing in Finney County, which had nearly 23 percent of children living in poverty in 2007, compared to less than 16 percent in 2002.

It's worth noting that much of the

data was compiled before the height of the recession, which means poverty-related numbers today may be worse.

One current indicator of poverty showed the percentage of public school students approved for free and reduced price lunch here at more than 63 percent, compared to 42 percent statewide.

A family in poverty is defined as two adults and two children living on less than \$21,834. Many adults have low-paying jobs and cannot make ends meet.

The good news is Finney County improved in some key areas.

The percentage of low-birth-weight babies dropped from 2003 to 2007, as did





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teen violent deaths. Also, youth tobacco use and binge drinking declined from 2004 to 2008, proof that programs addressing those areas help.

When it comes to poverty, more must be done to achieve similar results.

This community has benefited from tireless efforts to assist needy children and families through such organizations as United Methodist Mexican American Ministries, Russell Child Development Center and Kansas Children's Service League.

They can't go it alone. Poverty, which leads to the decay of communities, has to be a high priority and

attacked from many angles.

A popular cry of conservative candidates these days is for government to stay out of our lives.

On the contrary, if we're to battle the vicious cycle of generational poverty, government has to work alongside social services agencies in developing ways to give children a better chance.

Indeed, it would be refreshing to hear candidates' strategies on attacking poverty, a monumental and undeniable threat to the future of our youngsters and community as a whole.



**What should be done to combat the troubling poverty trend in Finney County? Whose responsibility is it? Talk about it at SWKTalk.com.**