

ENTERTAINMENT

Justice Dept.: Arts can help at-risk youngsters

WASHINGTON (AP)— Arts programs can help youngsters in danger of acting out their frustrations through violence, a Justice Department expert on young offenders told a congressional panel last week.

"Kids who are able to communicate with their peers and adults are much less likely to bottle up anger, which leads to the kind of incident we saw very recently in Georgia," said John J. Wilson, deputy administrator of the Office of

Juvenile Justice. "There was a child who was unable to express his frustrations."

He was referring to 15-year-old T.J. Solomon, who faces 20 counts of assault, cruelty and weapons offenses after shooting and wounding six youngsters at a suburban Atlanta school.

He reportedly was troubled about a breakup with his girlfriend.

Wilson pointed to a pilot arts program in Fulton

County, Ga., called "Art at Work" that targeted truants aged 14 to 16 who had been referred to the program by probation officers. It included arts instruction and job and literacy training. It was financed by his office and the National Endowment of the Arts.

At the start of the program, he said, fewer than three out of 10 of the truants could communicate effectively with one another, but after

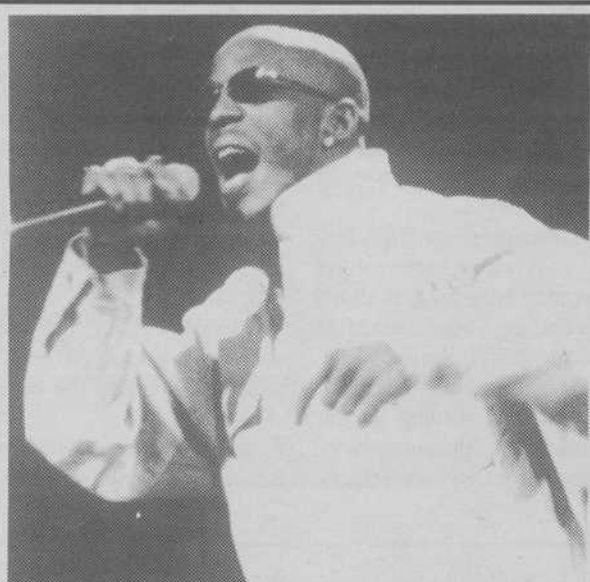
two years the figure had risen to more than eight out of 10.

Wilson also pointed to a pilot arts program in San Antonio, Texas, where delinquent behavior dropped by 16 percent among 11- to 13-year-olds. The rate in a control group that was not enrolled dropped by just 3 percent.

In Portland, Ore., a group of students 14 to 17 had already been before courts for juvenile crimes. Of those

who went into an arts program there was a 22 percent recidivism rate, compared to a 47 percent rate among those not enrolled.

Wilson spoke to a House panel considering President Clinton's proposed \$100 million budget for juvenile justice programs for fiscal 2000. The Justice Department has spent \$93 million on 573 delinquency prevention programs over the past few years, Wilson said.

**DMX's assault charges dropped**

DENVER (AP) — Authorities have decided not to file charges against rapper DMX in connection with a post-concert stabbing at a Denver restaurant.

Police had ordered DMX, also known as Earl Simmons, to appear in Denver for an interview after witnesses placed him in a group that attacked and stabbed a man on April 28 after a concert at the Denver Coliseum.

Simmons returned last week for the interview and witnesses were talked to again. Based on the investigation, the district attorney's office decided not to file charges, spokeswoman Sandy Romero said last Thursday.

Detective Virginia Lopez said the charges were dropped because a conviction was unlikely.

"As we expected, DMX was vindicated," Simmons' spokesman Ian Niles said in a statement.

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