



Dean addresses Every Child Matters Fund forum

By Sam Youngman 10/31/03

DURHAM, Oct. 31 -- Gov. Howard Dean wasted little time in drawing distinctions between his opponents plans for the future and his past achievements Friday morning at the University of New Hampshire.

"Every candidate talks about the future of kids; I'm not going to do that," Dean said at the Every Child Matters forum. "I'm going to tell you what we have done."

He is the fourth presidential candidate to address the group.

Dean repeatedly emphasized his recently unveiled child healthcare plan that includes home visits; a plan similar to one he implemented as governor of Vermont.

"One of the advantages of being governor is I've done those things for children," he said.

Dean responded to nearly every question by saying the focus should be on early childhood from the time they are born to 3-years-old.

"I think if you really care about children, look at what we did in Vermont and expect

that I'm going to do the same for the rest of the country," he said. "If you want to keep paying for prisons, keep doing what we're doing with child welfare."

At one point, when asked about his plan to ensure healthcare for children, Dean criticized rivals Gen. Wesley Clark and Sen. John Edwards's plan that would put much of the responsibility for child healthcare on parents.

"I think Wesley Clark and John Edwards's plans are a mistake," he said. "People don't like mandates, and people in New Hampshire certainly don't like mandates."

Dean repeatedly criticized President Bush's record and again promised to repeal the president's tax cuts to pay for a number of programs related to the well-being of children, as he said that children's issues are his most pressing priority.

"I have a 19-year-old and a 17-year-old," he said. "That's why my hair is white. It has nothing to do with my political career."