

but 80 percent also believe America's system is the world's best.

A large majority of Americans, 78 percent, also voiced confidence in the jury system.

"Those numbers are high, and we can feel good about them," Anderson said.

Among the poll's other findings: 90 percent believe wealthy people and companies often wear down their opponents by dragging out legal proceedings; 77 percent say it costs too much to go to court; 27 percent believe the best lawyers are selected to serve as judges.

Anderson said the poll indicates most Americans need and want to know more about the justice system. One tool, he said, could be increasing public access to the nation's courtrooms by televising more proceedings.

"I cannot think of a better civics lesson than . . . to be able to see and hear every argument before the Supreme Court of the United States," Anderson said. "One television camera in the Supreme Court will educate more people more effectively in one morning than the traditional methods can reach in one year."

All federal court proceedings currently are closed to radio and television coverage.

The poll has margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

[From the Dallas Morning News]

PROGRAM HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE SHED
TATTOOS AND THE LIFE THEY REPRESENT
(By Veronica Alaniz)

FORT WORTH, TEXAS.—Robert Barton's hands and arms are covered with marks of hatred, each painfully etched into his skin when he was in his early teens.

Tattoos that he once wore with pride are now shameful reminders of a life that Barton, 19, says he has left behind. But with the help of a nonprofit program the emblems of racism are beginning to fade from his body.

When they are finally gone, thanks to laser surgery provided at no cost by a Fort Worth doctor, Barton said, he will know that his new life has really begun.

"At the time, I thought it was the right thing to do," Barton said of the designs traced across his forearms, wrists and knuckles. "Now, it just doesn't make any sense. I want them gone. They don't mean anything to me now."

Getting rid of the unwanted tattoos and the shame that comes with them is Michael Bumagin's mission.

Since returning to Fort Worth a little more than a year ago, Bumagin, 57, has volunteered his time and expertise to help those with little means remove ugly reminders of their past.

"These kids have been in bad situations—gangs, broken homes. Some of them have been on the street. They've had a hard life," said the doctor, who has his own plastic surgery practice. "These tattoos are going to keep them from succeeding in life. They make it hard for them to get jobs, even in the most entry-level positions."

That is one of the reasons Jessica Cross, 21, wants the Tasmanian devil cartoon character above her right breast removed.

"If you have a tattoo, I think a lot of people think you're a bad person," said Cross. "Everybody looks at you, and I can see what they're thinking."

Barton said that feeling is all too familiar to him, and he'll be glad when he doesn't have to hide his hands in his pants pockets in shame.

"People see this stuff on me and slap a label on me and write me off," Barton said. "But this (tattoo removal) is going to open up a lot of doors for me and give me a lot of opportunity."

Every other month, young people such as Cross and Barton come by the dozens to wait for their turn with Bumagin.

Some hear about the service, administered by the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Fort Worth, by word-of-mouth. Others are referred by their local police departments, school counselors or probation officers.

In return for what many recipients call a life-changing service, the patients perform four hours of community service for each treatment. They call it a more than fair trade.

Gary Grossman, an Arlington Independent School District counselor, works with students in alternative programs and refers some to the tattoo removal program. He call Bumagin's work a godsend.

"Erasing those marks off their bodies is symbolic," Grossman said. "It's a way of leaving their past behind, a way to start a fresh, new, clean life. But for many, it's beyond their financial ability."

Bumagin said hearing his patients' stories is why he keeps doing the work.

"The kids benefit, the community benefits, and I get the feel-goods," he said.

But the program couldn't exist with Bumagin alone. Donations pay for rental of the laser machine and other supplies.

Cross, who paid \$50 for her tattoo while she was in high school, said that when she first looked into having it removed, the \$2,500 estimates she was given were prohibitive.

"I thought I was going to have to live with it forever," she said.

Danielle Lessard said she, too, was floored by the cost of losing her tattoo—a 2-inch-high tribute to her ex-boyfriend's gang name etched on her right hip.

When Lessard found out about Bumagin's work from the Fort Worth Police Department's gang unit, she jumped at the opportunity. She said that though her tattoo is not readily noticeable, its presence haunts her.

"Stupid. That's all I can say. I was 15, and it was a home job," said Lessard, now 18 and a Tarrant County Junior College student. "Since I'm not in that stuff anymore and I'm not in that environment, I don't want that stuff on my body."

Israel Villareal, 23, who got the first of several gang tattoos when he was 13, said he wants them gone so they won't influence his three children.

"I don't want my little kids growing up seeing them and thinking it's OK," he said.

Removing the tattoos takes far more time—and often hurts more—than getting them.

After her first treatment in January, Lessard said she wasn't expecting it to be so painful.

"Oh my gosh, this is stinging real bad," she said as she squirmed in her seat.

Bumagin said the pain comes from the particles of pigment that, when touched by the laser, explode through the skin.

The treatments cause redness, swelling and sometimes bleeding, but the symptoms disappear in a few hours. He said the pain decreases with each treatment as the tattoo fades, and the number of treatments varies by tattoo.

When Angela Acua showed up for her treatment last month, she was very apprehensive.

"I'm scared. What if it hurts?" she asked the doctor. After whimpering through the few minutes that it took to zap her tattoos, Acua turned to her boyfriend and gave him some advice.

"It hurt," she said. "Don't ever put anything on you."

NATIONAL KICK BUTTS DAY 1999

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for a nationwide initiative that encourages the reduction of teen smoking. Teen smoking reached an all-time high in 1997 with roughly 4.5 million kids between the ages of 12–17 using some type of tobacco product. Each day some 3,000 young people start smoking; one third of these kids will die too young because they smoked. If that wasn't enough, approximately 400,000 Americans die each year from cigarette smoking.

To counter these alarming statistics and to provide greater awareness about the dangers of smoking, The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids chose April 14 as the National Youth Movement to "Kick Butts." The goal of National Kick Butts Day is to encourage our teens to take a stand against tobacco products and fight for healthier futures for themselves and their peers.

I have spent my entire public career trying to prevent youth smoking. I support the objective of National Kick Butts Day. I urge all of my colleagues to join me and show their support for this serious and necessary campaign.

BREAUX-THOMAS PLAN IS NO
CURE FOR MEDICARE

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, thirty-nine million senior citizens and persons with disabilities on Medicare are relying on Congress to do the right thing. They are counting on Congress to save Medicare, a program that continues to improve the quality of life for millions of people. But they are certainly not counting on Congress to privatize Medicare and turn over the program to for-profit HMOs and insurance companies. The Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare debated such a plan. And that is the reason why the Commission did not have enough votes to make a formal recommendation to Congress. The Commission's proposal would have been a disaster for seniors and persons with disabilities and a boon for the HMOs and insurance industry.

My recent remarks printed in the Chicago Sun-Times follow:

The Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare nearly approved a plan to save Medicare. But a fundamental consideration was strangely missing from the proposal by Medicare Commission Chair Senator John Breaux (D-LA) and co-chair Representative Bill Thomas (R-CA): the detrimental effect this plan would have on the millions of seniors and persons with disabilities who rely on Medicare.

The simple fact is that the proposal nearly passed by the Medicare Commission is a disaster. It is a disaster for seniors and persons with disabilities.

By far the majority of the proposed "savings" under the Breaux-Thomas plan would