

Substance Abuse: A Big Problem in Our Society

It isn't what we might want to hear, but it is a fact that many individuals and families in our Jewish community are dealing with the problem of substance abuse. Our Jewish community, as well as others, has been slow to recognize this problem as evident.

The following is an article submitted by Stephen Newman, Director of Substance Abuse Services of Mecklenburg County and a member of the Jewish Family Services' Task Force on Substance Abuse. It addresses some of the issues involved in understanding alcohol and drug problems.

Dr. Smith Speaks On Drug Addiction

By Stephen Newman

Dr. David Smith spoke in Greensboro the other evening and although the weather forecast was threatening I decided to make the trip. Getting to listen to what Dr. Smith has to say is well worth the risk of encountering some slippery winter driving.

Twenty years ago, during America's psychedelic "Summer of Love," David Smith opened up the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic in San Francisco and he's been dealing with our many alcohol and other drug problems ever since. In fact, for my money, David Smith is the leading expert in the field of substance abuse in America.

Dr. Smith's talk in Greensboro was titled "Cocaine, Crack, and Designer Drugs" and, during his talk, he emphasized the damage that drugs are causing to many, many Americans.

"Twenty five percent of all deaths in our society," Dr. Smith told his audience, "are caused by drug use including use of alcohol, nicotine and the many illegal drugs that are currently available."

David Smith's medical specialty is addictionology and he is convinced that alcoholism and other forms of addictive disease run in families.

"Anybody is liable to addiction," Smith said. "But some are more liable than others. If you are predisposed to addiction and you are exposed to cocaine, your initial contact will be wonderful. Users say, I was born to use coke. But an overwhelmingly positive response to cocaine is a sign that you are at risk for addiction.

"I don't endorse experimentation with any drug but to say that all young people are equally at risk is not true. And to say that it is all based on the effects of the drug is not true. A susceptible host will like the drug more."

Smith's definition of addiction is clear and straightforward. It involves a compulsion to use the drug, a loss of control over how often and how much of the drug is used, continued use of the drug despite negative consequences that have resulted from the use, a possible predisposition to addiction, family and social problems due to the drug use, attempts at control over the use of the drug or drugs and the possibility of relapse after the initiation of sobriety.

"Loss of control," Smith said, "marks the onset of the addictive process."

And one of the dangerous characteristics of crack, a recently available form of



Dr. David Smith

smokeable cocaine, is how quickly loss of control can develop.

"It used to take an average of 4.7 years between the onset of cocaine use and addiction," Smith said. "But with crack, addiction can occur within weeks or months. Addiction can occur with a rapid and explosive onset when the cocaine is being used by means of a rapid system such as smoking crack or freebase cocaine."

David Smith used to be closely affiliated with the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), a lobbying group that supports the legalization of marijuana, but his answer to a question that was asked of him in Greensboro made it clear that he does not now support the legalization of any of the drugs that are now illegal.

"I am opposed to legalization," Smith said. "But I am also opposed to putting people with addictive disease in jail. I guess that means that I would support decriminalization. Legalization increases the supply and availability of a drug and it increases the pool of those who can become addicted.

"Ultimately the answer is in demand reduction which would result in a reduction of the supply. Our society has demonstrated an inability to handle the new forms of illegal drugs that have recently become available."

Throughout his talk David Smith kept coming back to the subject of the coming AIDS epidemic and he said that gay and bisexual intravenous drug users are the highest risk population for getting the disease.

"And the drug of choice for the population," Smith said, "is injectable cocaine and amphetamine. If you're going to work with cocaine in 1987 you have to know about AIDS. Your AIDS statistics in North Carolina are certainly lower than the figures in New York and California but they are on the way up. I'm not telling you how to stop your AIDS epidemic in North Carolina but I am telling you that you have to do something."

Congressional Reception Held In Honor Of Rabbi Schneerson's 85th Birthday

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

The U.S. Congress passed a bill designating April 10, which was the Lubavitcher Rebbe's 85th birthday, as Education Day USA. This resolution was in recognition of the Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson's efforts and accomplishments in the area of education of Jews worldwide. The Rebbe's efforts go beyond the boundaries of the Jewish people, with his campaign to teach the seven Noahdite laws to all of mankind.

On April 9, a Congressional reception was held in the prestigious Caucus Room in the Russel Building on Capitol Hill. This event was attended by over 40 US Senators and many more Congressmen who expressed their congratulations to the Rebbe who has shown so much vision and leadership and continues to illuminate the world with his educational campaign.

Rabbi Yossi Groner led the delegation from North Carolina and was greeted at the event by the following Carolina Senators and Congressmen: Senator Jesse Helms, Senator Terry Sanford, Senator Strom Thurmond, Rep. Cass Ballenger, Rep. Howard Coble, Rep. David Price, and many legislative assistants to the Congressmen. The above mentioned Senators and Congressmen had the opportunity to address the huge audience of Rabbis and lay leaders who came to salute Lubavitch from all over the country.

Later that evening, the Rab- bis flew up to New York where



(L to R) Rabbi Yossi Groner, Senator Terry Sanford, Wayne Silverman (Blumenthal Home).



Rabbi Groner and Senator Jesse Helms

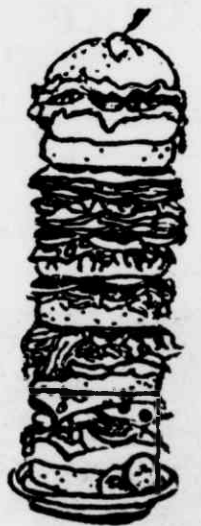
the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, ushered in his birthday with a call to the world to increase in the act of good deeds and for Jews to follow in the ways of the Torah. The Rebbe then distributed money for charity.

Earlier in the day, President Ronald Reagan received a

Lubavitch Delegation and signed in their presence the Congressional Bill Education Day USA. He also inscribed his name on the International Scroll of Honor, honoring the Rebbe on his 85th birthday. This scroll will travel all over the world to be signed by heads of State everywhere.

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