

The Charlotte Post

Published weekly by the Charlotte Post Publishing Co.
1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Gerald O. Johnson
Publisher

Robert Johnson
Co-publisher/
General Manager

Herbert L. White
Editor-In-Chief

What the government isn't telling you about HIV/AIDS

By Amy Holmes
SPECIAL TO THE POST

"Ms. Smith, I'm happy to announce that you have delivered a beautiful baby boy. He looks like a healthy child. You and your baby Christopher should be ready to go home tomorrow. Congratulations!"

Christopher will die of AIDS before his fourth birthday. Ms. Smith had the HIV virus, but she never knew because her hospital's routine tests did not include the simple \$10 screening for HIV, the seventh leading cause of death among children aged 1 to 4. Christopher might have lived had his HIV status been diagnosed and treated.

Each year, 2,000 babies like Christopher unnecessarily contract HIV from their mothers. They don't have to: prenatal intervention can dramatically reduce the HIV transmission rate from mother to infant. Studies have shown that AZT treatment before, during and six weeks after birth can reduce the transmission risk by two thirds.

Of those 2,000 babies who test positive for HIV, 25 percent actually have the virus. The others have inherited their mothers antibodies. However, they too are in great danger of contracting HIV should their mothers choose to breast feed. Tragically, breast milk is a carrier of HIV/AIDS.

Under current policies enacted by the Centers for Disease Control, neither the babies nor their mothers are tested for HIV. The mothers don't know, and their babies die. Most of the HIV infected newborns are African American and Latino (in Newark, N.J., AIDS is the top killer of African American women aged 24-44), yet the National Black Women's Health Association, the Latino Commission on AIDS, the Multicultural AIDS Coalition and the National Minority AIDS Council all support sacrificing babies to a policy of "don't ask, don't tell."

Incredibly, under pressure from these groups whose main concern is their adult constituency, CDC has ceased testing infants for HIV/AIDS. They argue that disclosing the HIV test results of newborns unnecessarily reveals the HIV status of the mother, impinging upon her right not to know.

The CDC's policy to withhold medical treatment and intervention is chillingly suggestive of the infamous Tuskegee experiment. Beginning in the late 1930s, 400 black men infected with syphilis were tracked and recorded to study the progression of their disease. They were never informed that they were infected, and never offered treatment.

Now there is hope for babies like Christopher. The House of Representatives has passed a bi-partisan amendment (Coburn/Ackerman/Waxman) that mandates testing and disclosure of newborns whose mother's HIV status is unknown. The Senate, however, has passed a much weaker version, giving lip service to the need for voluntary testing and counseling programs. The failure of the voluntary testing approach to the AIDS epidemic is poignantly proven by the fact that less than half of the 1.3 million Americans infected with HIV actually know they have the virus.

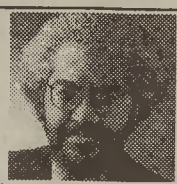
In New York state, where millions of dollars have been spent for voluntary prenatal counseling, only 24 percent of all pregnant women knew if they had the HIV virus when they came to the hospital to deliver, only 17 percent filled out a form requesting the test and some 60 percent of the newborns left the hospital undiagnosed. "Voluntary testing" sounds great on its face, but the most innocent victims of this policy - newborn babies - don't have the opportunity to volunteer.

The Pediatric AIDS Foundation is running a campaign which reads: "The only thing worse than losing a child to AIDS is finding out you don't have to." We don't have to.

AMY HOLMES is a member of the Independent Women's Forum.

The GOP presidential primaries

Manning Marable



The Republican party is in the midst of selecting its presidential candidate who will face Bill Clinton this November. A survey of the political landscape tells us that the Republican hopefuls have few, if any, practical solutions to the nation's problems. The selection of the Republican presidential candidate this year will occur very quickly, probably by the beginning of April. That is because a large number of primaries and caucuses will be held during the next several weeks.

As of the eve of the New Hampshire Republican primary, there were four remaining candidates who had a shot at winning the Republican nomination. The two most interesting personalities to emerge, Steve Forbes and Patrick Buchanan, represented two distinct tendencies within the largely white conservative movement in the United States.

Forbes, the multimillionaire publisher, is an economic conservative in the mold of Republic leader Jack Kemp. Forbes campaigns for a 17 percent flat tax on wages and salaries. He proposes a \$13,000 exemption for each adult and \$5,000 for each

child, and the abolition of nearly all taxes on interest, capital gains, pensions and, of course, inheritance.

Conservatively, the adoption of Forbes's flat tax would increase the Federal deficit by \$200 billion a year. Forbes' supply side conservative economics are a throwback to Ronald Reagan's policies of the early 1980s. We should remember that Reagan's tax policy was responsible for the massive federal deficit we have today. Back in 1981, the federal deficit was \$79 billion. By 1983, it had increased to \$207 billion. Reaganomics redistributed wealth upward, reducing the standard of living of millions of American workers. By 1994, the top one percent of all U.S. households had a greater net wealth than the bottom 95 percent of all families.

As reactionary as Forbes is on economic issues, even he does not deserve the kind of scurrilous, unprincipled attacks that Republican social conservatives have waged against him. Members of the Christian Coalition and opponents of reproductive rights have smeared Forbes by claiming that his father was a homosexual. Forbes was attacked for being pro-abor-

tion and conservatives falsely claimed that the millionaire's family yacht displayed a Maplethorpe work of erotica. The leader of the Republicans' social and religious conservatives is political commentator Buchanan. For years, Buchanan has been a notorious polemicist of the extreme right. As a presidential candidate, he has become a poster boy for the Christian Coalition. Buchanan supports a constitutional ban on all abortions including those from rape and incest. He favors a five-year moratorium on legal immigration to the United States. What distinguishes Buchanan from the rest of the Republican rogue's gallery is his fierce opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement, GATT and free trade policies pursued by both the GOP and the Clinton administration. Buchanan frequently attacks large multinational corporations in a style which superficially imitates the political language of Jesse Jackson.

The two other candidates in the race, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, are the most likely to win the nomination as of this writing. Dole is the lackluster front runner: shallow, opportunistic and mean.

Dole's desire for his party's nomination is so strong that he is willing to say literally anything to get it. For example, Dole recently exclaimed to one audience, "I'll even be Ronald Reagan, if that's what

you want me to be." Alexander, a moderate conservative, is the candidate most feared by the White House with the exception of former General Colin Powell. And Alexander's chief claim to fame is that he is running as "None of the Above."

The really sad thing about the Republican presidential contest is that no genuine debate is occurring on real issues which affect most Americans. Part of the problem is that there is no contest within the Democratic party. Keep in mind that since 1968 there has been a power struggle between liberals vs. centrists inside the Democratic party's primaries. For example, George McGovern vs. Ed Muskie in 1972, Jimmy Carter vs. Ted Kennedy in 1980, Walter Mondale vs. Jesse Jackson in 1984, Michael Dukakis vs. Jesse again in 1988 and Bill Clinton vs. Paul Tsongas in 1992.

Without a liberal and progressive alternative, the moderates and neo-liberals within the Democratic party push public policies to the right. The GOP presidential race has absolutely nothing to say to the realities of black American life, but whoever emerges as the victor may have a profound impact on everyone's interests.

MANNING MARBLE is Professor of History and Director of the Institute for Research in African American Studies, Columbia University, New York City.

DOLE LOOKS TO BROADEN HIS APPEAL!!!



AMY HOLMES
THE CHARLOTTE POST
COPYRIGHT 1996

Children doing drugs

By John Duff
SPECIAL TO THE POST

As parents we are faced with the unpleasant fact that many of our children are going to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and smoke marijuana prior to graduating high school.

According to the last three years of the federal government sponsored Household Surveys on Drug Abuse, teenage marijuana use has nearly doubled since 1992. Another recent national survey found last year that one in four high school sophomores and one in three high school seniors smoked pot. In addition, the use of cocaine, heroin, hallucinogenic drugs, and stimulants are also on the rise.

There is only one choice a parent has under these circumstances. Face this situation head on. Find out what you can do as a parent.

There are some important points regarding your role as a parent in substance abuse prevention. You must educate

yourself, so you understand why children are turning to drugs at such early ages.

As a parent you have a better chance of influencing your child to stay away from drugs than anyone else, but there is a hitch. The least effective method of substance abuse prevention is also the most common approach used by parents. It is the "do what I say, not what I do" approach.

Children are a reflection of adult society, not the other way around. Unfortunately, adults are all too often a bad example when it comes to drugs. When an adult smokes tobacco and/or drinks alcohol in his or her household, and then tells his or her children they should not smoke tobacco or drink alcohol because they are not old enough, it is a waste of time and may even be counter-productive.

Honesty of your own use of these drugs and their consequences is essential. Even then, you should expect that

your child may still want to be like you.

The use of cigarettes and alcohol perpetuates itself through this process of children copying adults, and only the adult or parent can stop the process. Seventy-seven million Americans have tried illicit drugs. One in eight Americans used illicit drugs in 1993 - 24.4 million. The number of tobacco and alcohol consumers is much greater.

Let me point out, the primary drugs used by children are tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana. It is these substances you must address as a parent. A recent study has shown that nearly 90 percent of cocaine users had smoked tobacco, drank alcohol, and used marijuana first.

What does this mean? While millions of adolescents experiment with and become consumers of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana, the majority

of a much smaller number of cocaine users began with these three "gateway" drugs first. In other words, if we can stop experimentation with these gateway drugs by our adolescents, we can also lower the number of hard-core addicts estimated to be several million.

An important point to remember is that any time someone decides to use a drug there is a common denominator or reason why. Drugs make people temporarily feel better than they are feeling.

This is true for all drug use. Whether a person consumes an aspirin for a headache, antibiotics or other medicines for an illness, drinks alcohol socially, or takes heroin to produce a drug stupor, this still holds true. The dilemma we face as

parents in wanting to prevent substance abuse is where do we draw the line of synthetically feeling good with chemicals. The law says at age 21 you can use alcohol, but other recreationally used mind-altering substances are never legal. This, of course, is a double standard; and children see

this immediately, both in age limit and choice of the drug "alcohol."

Almost all consumers of alcohol began using alcohol as teenagers. Just look amongst your own friends. Think about what age you were when you first experimented with or became a consumer of alcohol. Were you 21?

What is the problem here? You do not want your child to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, smoke marijuana, or use other drugs. But this is what they see so many adults in society doing and it is their society, too.

Of course, getting our adult society to stop smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana or using other drugs would be tremendously difficult, if not impossible.

If adults turned away from tobacco and alcohol, much of the funding for our national sports teams would be devastated through lost advertising revenue. Whole industries would buckle with lost jobs -- all for our children. The likelihood of this happening is small. But what can happen is adults addicted to tobacco and alcohol can learn to be honest with themselves and their children. Most children love their parents first, and can

understand and respect the truth.

If you find that your child has begun to experiment with cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs talk to him about it now. Tell them the truth. If you or your child is addicted contact Narconon. New breakthroughs in the field of drug rehabilitation made by E. Ron Hubbard have resulted in the Narconon drug treatment program which works to get even hard-core heroin and cocaine addicts off drugs for good.

In the past it was sometimes believed that "once a drug addict, always a drug addict." But today this is no longer the case.

For information on the Narconon drug prevention or rehabilitation program contact Narconon at 800-468-6933. There are other programs that help you as a parent as well. The Scott Newman Center's "Neighborhoods in Action" (800) 783 6396 and the National Parents Resource Institute For Drug Education, Inc. (PRIDE) (404) 577-4500.

JOHN DUFF is co-author of "The Truth About Drugs, The Body, Mind and You" and is president of Narconon International.