

Drugs contribute to our societal decline

By Robert Harris
SPECIAL TO THE POST

There is a common thread that runs through many of the worst ills plaguing society. In the examination of contributing factors to crime, violence, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, the health care crisis, and the deficit, one element linked to all of these stands out - substance abuse. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse, although usually thought of as a "stand alone" on our society today.

Alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse contributors significantly to this nation's overwhelming health care costs as well as the deficit. Twenty-five to 40 people out of every 100 in general hospital beds are being treated for complications of alcoholism. Annually, about 520,000 deaths are due to alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drug abuse. It is estimated that in 1993, the cost for every man, woman, and child in America.

Alcohol and other drug-related crime cost society \$57.3 billion in 199. Annual arrests total nearly 3.2 million for alcohol and other drug statutory crimes. In addition, alcohol is a key factor in 68 percent of manslaughters, 62 percent of assaults, 54 percent of

murders/attempted murders, 48 percent of robberies, and 44 percent burglaries.

Drug and alcohol are contributing factors in violent incidents, including sexual assault. Domestic incidents of wife battering and child abuse often carry an alcohol or other drug component. And, according to a 1994 U.S. Department of Justice report, more than half of defendants accused of murdering their spouses had been drinking alcohol at the time of the murder.

Alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs can impair judgement, increasing the risk of having unsafe sex. Unprotected sex with an partner is the most common way that HIV/AIDS is spread. Additionally, sex under the influence can lead to sex without contraception; at least half of all unplanned pregnancies occur when people drink and/or use drugs before the act of intercourse. The continued use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs while pregnant can lead to birth defects and/or addicted babies, caring the damage of substance abuse into the next generation.

Preventing the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs could mean substantially decreasing many of the Nation's problems. But what can we do to work for prevention? At home and in our communities, there

are basic prevention strategies we can follow and teach to others.

Raise awareness of the dangers of drugs use and the benefits of constructive behavior.

Promote good parenting skills and strengthen the family as the first defense against drug abuse.

Provide positive role models for young people.

Pave the way for individuals to build social, academic, and vocational skills, allowing them the chance to develop into self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

Mobilize communities to establish environments conducive to personal growth.

Support, policies that promote healthy lifestyles and change community norms for the better.

In order to keep the Nation strong and solvent, we as individuals need to be healthy and productive and to help others become healthy and productive. To realize these goals, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse must be prevented. Prevention works, but it can't work for everyone until everyone works for prevention.

ROBERT HARRIS is a cluster leader for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Fighting Back, an anti-drug campaign.

Letters to The Post Well done on Hill

Thank you so much for the beautiful article on Sister Trudy Hill, Missionary to Ghana (July 17). Even though I know Trudy very well, I am still amazed at what God will do through even one person if she will make herself available to Him. Trudy's mission started with a plan to provide bicycles to Ghanaian pastors who sometimes walk 10-20 miles per day. For years she has traveled alone Ghana to assess the most pressing needs of the people, and then returned to the United States to work tirelessly to provide those needs. I thank God for her and the example she has set for me, as a relatively new missionary. Having just returned from my second missionary trip to Kenya, I praise God for the generosity of the many wonderful individuals and Churches that supported Trudy in Ghana and our Mission Team in Kenya. As Trudy always reminds people, the reward to those who support the mission effort is the same as the reward for the missionary; because the Church is one body, with each member having separate, but critically important roles.

Thanks again, Charlotte Post, for giving the space to a story that will bless all who read it. And thank you, Trudy Hill, for being the tireless warrior for Jesus Christ that you are.

Lydia A. Harper-Epps
Charlotte

Exorbitant salaries soak the state budget

By Jon Sanders
SPECIAL TO THE POST

RALEIGH - Salaries of state officials in North Carolina are like Superman, going up, up and away. What's worse, the increases appear to be linked and therefore endemic - a sickness plaguing the state's coffers.

Here are three recent examples of this outbreak:

Example One: When the UNC Board of Governors prepared to seek a replacement for retiring system president C.D. Spangler Jr., one aspect of the job they considered was salary. Spangler in 1996 was receiving an annual salary of \$158,660. Saying that salary was too low to recruit qualified applicants, last September the board raised it to \$190,000.

Furthermore, they hiked the salary to be offered the new system president to between \$210,700 to \$269,400. Ironically, the board's choice, Molly Corbett Broad, received an annual salary of \$162,888 last year as vice chancellor of the

California State University system - little more than Spangler's original 1996 salary and far less than his adjusted salary of \$190,000. The irony was lost on the board, who awarded Broad an annual salary of \$240,000 anyway. So in one year, with no justification, the salary of the president of the UNC system has been raised by 51.3 percent.

Example Two: When former governor Bob Scott resigned as president from the State Board of Community Colleges in 1994, he was earning an annual salary of \$113,673. His successor, Lloyd "Vic" Hackley, finagled a salary much higher than Scott's using some financial abracadabral salary negotiations with the board. Hackley said his compensation at Fayetteville State University, where he was chancellor, was \$231,000 annually. (A curious legislator assigned research staff members to calculate Hackley's compensation package, and they came up with \$178,185 - \$53,000 less than Hackley's estimate.) Hackley's trick was in double-counting his benefits (such as the

rental value of the chancellor's house and the cost of the house-keeping services, both provided by FSU). First he added together the value of the benefits, then he added in the extra salary he would have needed to purchase those services on his own. Presto! Instant salary inflation. The illusion worked. The board raised the president's salary to \$140,000 - 24 percent higher than Scott's - to prevent Hackley from suffering what would seem an inordinate pay cut, and Hackley was able to say gallantly that he was taking a cut in compensation of nearly \$100,000.

When Hackley left under a cloud two years later, he was receiving an annual salary of \$149,226. Instead of returning the president's salary to a more reasonable level, however, the board granted incoming president Martin Lancaster an annual salary of \$155,000. So in three years, including Hackley's artificial increase, the salary of the president of the State Board of Community Colleges has jumped by 36.4 percent.

Example Three: The jump didn't end there. As the salary of the president of the State Board of Community Colleges rose, so did the salaries of the board's administration officials. Some administrators saw one-year raises of 35 and 41 percent. The executive vice president, J. Parker Chesson Jr., received a 13 percent raise, from \$101,709 to \$115,000, in the two years following Scott.

Chesson's salary is important because it enabled him to tell legislators considering him for the post of chairman of the Employment Security Commission (ESC) that his salary was much higher than the \$77,365 annual salary given the outgoing ESC head, Ann Q. Duncan (a trick he no doubt learned from Hackley).

Chesson's story prompted legislators to eliminate the line item specifying the ESC chairman's annual salary at \$77,365 and replace it with a provision a few pages over that allowed the governor to set the salary to "an amount no higher than the highest salary set by the General

Assembly for an executive branch official."

With the highest salary being the \$113,143 (stipulated for the state controller), Chesson's salary was - naturally - set at \$113,000. So in one year, thanks to some budgetary shenanigans, the annual salary of the ESC chairman was raised by 46 percent.

This last example, at least, prompted some legislative action. Rep. Carolyn Russell (R-Wayne) is trying to bring the ESC chairman's salary back to normal, although Sen. Aaron Plyler (D-Union) has vowed to fight it in the conference committee. Of course legislators are a cagey lot when it comes to salaries; another House Republican, Monroe Buchanan (Mitchell), proposed a four percent pay raise for legislators, which was of course approved in the House as part of its budget proposal.

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On ethnocentrism

By Junious R. Stanton
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
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Ethnocentrism is the characteristic of holding one's own racial or ethnic group to be worthy, of value; identifying with and being proud to be a member of one's own racial or national group. It is a natural and healthy support system that provides identity, commonality, continuity and belonging. It is an extension of the role of the family within the ethnic group.

Ethnocentrism has nothing to do with hatred of another group. It simply means that one's primary loyalty is to his or her own family, race or ethnic origin. The dynamics of ethnocentrism provides insight to our situation as Africans in America. Unfortunately people of African descent are the one group in America that manifests the opposite of ethnocentrism; xenocentrism. This is the characteristic of denigrating one's self and holding groups outside of one's own ethnic, racial or national origin as being superior. This explains why black and brown-skinned people of African descent have pictures of depigmented Europeans hanging in their churches and homes. It explains why black folks send their children to "white" schools and pay big money to see motion pictures and videos where relatively few of the performers and actors or black.

Tragically, even at this late date many black children still prefer to play with dolls that look nothing like themselves. It explains the bizarre pattern of a people with a collective disposable income of over \$400 billion a year consciously not patronizing or supporting their own businesses, professionals, cultural or charitable causes. This explains why black communities have so little economic pulse and vitality and why foreign entrepreneurs do booming business in our neighborhoods. The one great thing about human beings is that we each have the capacity and wherewithal to change, to mature and become wiser. Social change begins with the individual.

We will change our situation only when enough individuals change their self-image, priorities and values. We will change when individuals and families make it a priority to buy black art and decorate their surroundings with images that reflect ourselves.

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Too early to talk about N.C. governor's race



The governor's race in 2000. The presidential election that same year.

Is it too early to start talking about who will be running for those offices?

For most people it surely is. But not for us. Not for you and me - and others like us who feed upon political speculation the way our normal friends devour news of sports stars and entertainment celebrities.

For us it is never too early to gossip about "who might run for what." So let's talk about the two races: governor and president. In the North Carolina governor's race, the Democratic lineup looks pretty simple. Lt. Gov. Dennis Wicker and Attorney General Mike Easley are both in a good position to run. Both have organized and won state-wide races. Both have a network of support. Their interest in running for

governor is no news. The question of speculation is whether there will be other Democrats to challenge them.

Senate leader Marc Basnight is often mentioned in the legislative halls as a possibility. But Basnight doesn't encourage this kind of talk. Nor does Erskine Bowles, President Clinton's chief of staff, when people suggest that he might be interested.

What about the Republicans? The choices are not obvious. There are, of course, two Republicans with experience running for governor - Robin Hayes and Richard Vinroot. Neither was successful, but both now know their way around the state. That experience gives them a head start on the others.

Vinroot is preparing to run. Hayes is considering it. But he is also considering the possibility of running for the U.S. Congress next year against Bill Hefner. If he won that race, it would be hard, it seems to me, to turn around and run for governor in the very next election. If he lost, he would have a hard time convincing Republicans that he

could win the governor's race.

The other folks people talk about are N.C. House Majority Leader Leo Daughtry and Raleigh Mayor Tom Fetzter. Although neither has run a statewide campaign, each has contacts and support across the state.

Will there be others? Sure. I am betting on someone whose first name is "Jim." Since 1973, every governor of North Carolina has had that name (Jim Holshouser, Jim Hunt, and Jim Martin).

So if people call you Jim, consider throwing your hat in the governor's race. You will have an asset that the current prospective candidates are missing.

In the presidential race, like the governor's race in North Carolina, the Democratic field is pretty well defined: Vice President Al Gore. House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt. And, possibly, former Senator Bill Bradley.

Gephardt and Gore have run for president before. If campaign experience is an asset, both of them have it. Gore has the extra

benefits - and burdens - of his partnership with President Clinton.

Gephardt, like Bob Dole before him, faces the problem of dealing with the demands of congressional leadership and a presidential campaign.

It is a very tough challenge. Bradley would be the outsider - and that may be an advantage in 2000. On the Republican side, the newest star, Senator Fred Thompson, got his first tryout last month. How did you think he did in chairing the hearing on campaign finance practices?

My opinion: I was disappointed. Thompson was a pretty good movie actor and I expected a better performance as a chairman in front of the camera. Still, an all-Tennessee presidential race between Thompson and Gore would be a classic.

Another Tennessean, former



Hunt

governor and 1996 presidential candidate Lamar Alexander might have a better chance in 2000 than he did last time - if he still has the drive to run again.

Then there is William Weld, the former governor of Massachusetts, whose current battle with our senior senator over an ambassadorship to Mexico might be an effort to get national attention for a presidential run.

It will be fun to watch, but I am not betting on him.

And there are the others. Reruns perhaps for Phil Gramm and Malcolm Forbes. Former Vice President Quayle. Sen. Trent Lott, the majority leader. More likely, perhaps, the Republicans will find strength in a solid, practical, hardworking governor whose name is not on any body's chart yet.

Or even more likely yet, North Carolina's favorite daughter, Elizabeth Dole.

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Let's follow Sojourner's trail to become involved in the sciences

By Stephanie E Myers
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

This year's fourth of July carried a special thrill for me. After the smoke from the fireworks had cleared, my husband and I sat in front of my personal computer and surfed the NASA Internet site where photos were being transmitted from Mars 118 million miles away. The pictures beamed via satellite in "real time" were taken by the Sojourner Truth Rover, a toy sized, land rover transported to Mars by the Mars Pathfinder. We

were thrilled by the experience on several levels. First, we realized that we were eye witnesses to a worldwide historic event. Second, as publishers we were impressed that we were able to get the information and photos at exactly the same time as the rest of the world. And finally, having served four years as director of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Commercial Space Transportation, I was gratified that my work, along with many other advocates of the commercial use of space, had resulted in pushing NASA to allow citizens

and businesses direct access to information from space research. This means that commercial companies have more opportunities than ever to find ways to create products and explore economic opportunities through space exploration. Although excited, I did, however, feel a tinge of sadness because I realized that in all probability most African Americans could care less! Most of us are so involved with issues of survival, that we don't have the time or energy to think about making money from space exploration. But, I would like to suggest that African Americans pay

more attention to the Mars Exploration project and get with it! Let's follow Sojourner Truth...again! If history is full of lessons, maybe there is a message for us in the life of the Sojourner Truth, after whom the Mars land rover was named. Born into slavery in 1797, Sojourner Truth was a unique, charismatic woman who was fearless, strong and dynamic. She traveled extensively forging new ground in the fight against slavery. Considered illiterate, she was faced with overwhelming problems, but rose above her daily conditions and dealt with the

larger issues of her time. Today, she is recorded in U.S. history as one of the most powerful abolitionists of the 1800s. During slavery, our ancestors followed Sojourner Truth towards freedom. Today, it is important that we follow the spacecraft Sojourner into the 21st century. We must realize that, along with everyone else in the world, we are in a new era.

STEPHANIE E. MYERS is former director of the U.S. Office of Commercial Space Transportation, is an author, public speaker and vice president of a publishing company.

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