

Substance Abuse Study Names Brunswick As Problem County

BY RAHN ADAMS

A statewide survey's recent finding that Brunswick County has a substance abuse problem wasn't news to Bill Walz, whose job is to help local residents deal with their alcohol and drug problems on a day-to-day basis.

The 65-page study, which was released March 27 by the Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina, listed Brunswick County—the state's 43rd most densely populated county—as having the 13th worst substance abuse problem.

"It didn't surprise me that Brunswick County has a drug and alcohol problem," said Walz, a psychologist and director of the Southeastern Center's Brunswick County office in Bolivia. He added, however, that he thinks statistics in the survey represent only the "tip of the iceberg."

Entitled "Cutting the Cost of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse in North Carolina," the study is composed of suggestions and analyses directed to Lt. Gov. Jim Gardner, who heads the state's "drug cabinet," as well as to Gov. Jim Martin and the N.C. General Assembly.

"I have nothing against prisons and punishment," writes Anthony Mulvihill, executive director of the Durham-based alcohol and drug council. "The state may need more prison cells. My point is prisons and punishment alone don't solve anyone's addiction problem. The intervention and treatment services in the prison system and in the communities hardly scratch the surface."

Mulvihill's main recommendation is that "for every \$1 North Carolina puts into the construction

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—Bill Walz, Director Brunswick Center

and operation of new prison cells, the state needs to put \$1 into supervision, treatment, housing and education of recovering addicts in the communities," Gov. Martin has proposed that the state spend almost half a billion dollars on prison expansion.

While he had heard only the main findings of the survey, Southeastern Center board member Rex Gore of Shallotte indicated last week that he agrees with Mulvihill's analysis. "Being 13th points to a need for additional money and renewed efforts in our courts and schools in drug education and treatment," Gore told the *Beacon*.

The study ranked the state's 100 counties by translating six alcohol and drug factors into incidents per 100,000 population. 1988 statistics were used in the survey. Factors considered were: drug overdose deaths, intravenous AIDS cases, hepatitis-B cases, alcohol-related cirrhosis deaths, drug arrests and driving while impaired arrests.

According to the survey, 1988 Brunswick County figures showed two drug (cocaine) overdose deaths, five hepatitis-B cases, eight alcohol-related cirrhosis deaths, 96 drug arrests and 536 DWI arrests.

Compared to other counties in individual categories, Brunswick ranked 95th in drug overdoses, 93rd in AIDS cases, 64th in hepatitis-B cases, 89th in cirrhosis deaths, 16th

in drug arrests and 31st in DWI arrests.

Walz said that although the local figures seem low, they underscore the need for "specific treatment" of alcohol and drug abuse. Southeastern Center's Bolivia office offers mainly alcohol abuse treatment, while Cape Fear Substance Abuse Treatment Center handles local drug abuse treatment cases.

The local director noted that Brunswick County's alcohol and drug problems are understandable because the poverty level here is relatively high; the county is a "major entry point" for illegal drugs, as evidenced by local marijuana- and cocaine-trafficking investigations in recent years; and sections of the coastal county are "party communities," where some individuals visit the area to "party" and then never leave, Walz said.

"Far and away, alcohol is the biggest abuse problem here," Walz commented, adding that treatment for cocaine and crack abuse also needs particular attention in Brunswick County.

The study points out that 19 of the 25 highest-ranking counties are located along the paths of Interstates 85 and 95, and U.S. 74, which generally are considered by law enforcement agencies to be drug-trafficking corridors. On the coast, Brunswick, New Hanover, Beaufort and Dare counties are listed among the top 25 problem counties.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Lincoln First-Graders 'Book It'

Esther Smith's first-grade class at Lincoln Primary School, Leland, recently celebrated 100-percent achievement in the Pizza Hut "Book-It" program with a pizza party at the company's Leland restaurant. The students read more than 1,000 books in the program, which ran from last October to March. Pictured are: (front row, from left) Ashley Collins, Jessica Thurman, Travis Henderson, Jeff Lewis, Jason Ganey, Susan Lewis and LaQuina Toomer; (second row, from left) Ashley Milliken, Latonya Carr, Robert Royal, Holly Fowler, Zedric James, Ray Baldwin, Joshua Sawyer, Dusty Greiner and Nicole Lunsford; (third row, from left) Aaron Perkins, O'Bryan Munn, Lauren Boyles, Staci Brew, Ben Matava and David Skaggs; (fourth row, from left) student teacher Kim Briles, restaurant assistant manager Penny Long and Mrs. Smith. Not pictured are students Anthony Autwell and Stephanie Davis, and teacher's assistant Geraldine McKoy.

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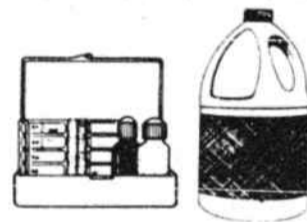


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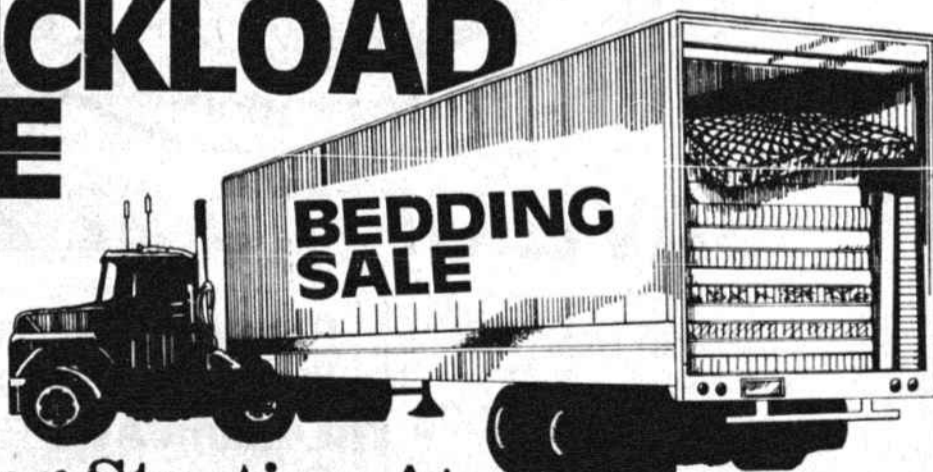
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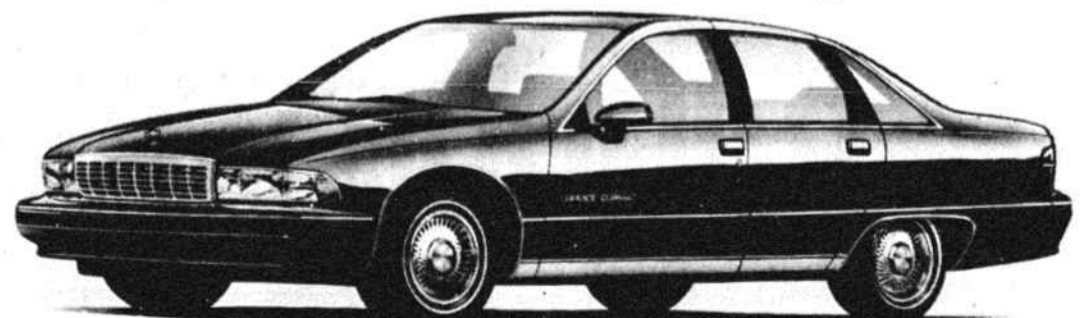
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