

EDITORIAL

Addicts recover without fanfare

*Editors note: In the following column, John is a fictitious name used to protect the anonymity of a local NA member, in accordance with the 12 Traditions of NA.

Remember when drugs were a big issue?

Well, let's examine what's being done. Nationally, it doesn't seem like drugs are in the news too much lately, with religious sex scandals dominating the media's attention. But locally, television and radio stations have been airing anti-drug spots. WTKR-TV recently ran a weeklong series highlighting the dangers of drug abuse and where help can be gotten. David Toma, a recovering addict and former policeman, came to Hampton Coliseum to speak about the dangers of drugs.

Toma's speech was moving, but the shame is that those who are suffering the most from addiction were probably not there to hear him. His message may have hit home to those who don't use drugs or to those who are only experimenting. His message may save a few from the horrors of addiction. But what about those who are in the throes of a heavy addiction? Sure, Toma is charismatic and may reach a few, but he's gone after one night. Who's there to pick up the pieces of the shattered life of an addict? Who is there to help him stay off drugs once he has stopped?

Narcotics Anonymous, or NA, is there.

While experts argue about the causes of addiction and possible treatments; while politicians argue about how

much to spend and what to spend it on; recovering addicts are daily helping each other stay off drugs by sharing their experiences, strengths and hopes. Recovering drug addicts are in the forefront of the battle every day, fighting a daily battle to stay off drugs by helping each other. They do all this and most people are not aware that the fellowship exists.

A little over a year ago, there were no NA meetings in Elizabeth City. Now, there are two meetings each week. Two of the same people who were guiding lights behind the local fellowship are still there, still "carrying the message to the addict who still suffers."

Sometimes there are only two or three people at a meeting, but these dedicated few keep hanging in. They say carrying the message helps them stay "clean" so they look at it as a privilege. *John says he sometimes get frustrated because new people come in, go to a few meetings, don't find what they want and leave. He also said he realizes that when an addict really wants to stop he can, but breaking through the denial of the existence of addiction is a tough process.

The members of NA in Elizabeth City stress that the program helps them learn to live life and accept life on its own terms and not their own. They say recovery is often a very humbling and painful process, but they all say it is much better than using drugs.

The members of this groups don't look any different than you or me. They don't look

like the stereotypical junkie with the needle hanging out of

his arm. They do, however, seem to have a certain view of life - a resignation that they are exactly where they belong - helping addicts and asking for no recognition. They seem to sincerely believe that no matter what, if they stay drug free, things will work out for the best in the end. After the hell they've been through, this view seems quite justified. Like John says, "Any life is better than the one I lived when I was using drugs."

So the world goes on. The media finds a new crusade - another sensational story. Drug abuse experts and others are grabbing headlines in the fight against drug abuse. Young adults who don't know anything about drugs telling people who know just about everything about them to "just say no" is not a panacea.

It's one approach, but for the addict who is still using drugs it is not really effective. They've already said "yes," and for many of them "no" can only be brought about through treatment and a support group such as NA after treatment.

While all these methods and "cures" are getting headlines, the members of NA in our community quietly go about their business of "helping the addict who still suffers." Those who are recovering in this program say it works and most of them say it is the only way they can stay "clean."

Let the headline grabbers grab headlines. Let the politicians and experts argue. Let the young adults say "no." Just leave the sharing of the message of recovery (living life drug-free) to those best qualified to share it - the addicts recovering through NA.



Sex Ed is needed

by Robin Sawyer
Associate Editor

"Every thirty seconds another teenager in the United States becomes pregnant." According to research, "of the 29 million teenagers between the ages of 13-19, 12 million are estimated to have had sexual intercourse."

The AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) epidemic and the problem of teenage pregnancy are forcing educators to take another look at the merits of sex education. Realizing the seriousness of the AIDS virus and the magnitude of the teenage pregnancy problem, it becomes obvious that it is no longer rational for legislators, educators and parents to deny the benefits of sex education. In fact, sex education is the first step in eliminating these threats to the young people of this country.

Scientists predict that within five years the AIDS cases in the U.S. will rise from the 25,000 recorded today to 270,000. By 1991 there are projected to be at least 179,000 AIDS-related deaths. Furthermore, the American Social Health Association predicts "at least 2.5 million teenagers in the U.S. will contract a sexually transmitted disease this year."

While these facts are startling and frightening, they are only the beginning. According to Facts on File, a 1986 study done by the House Select Committee on Children, youth and families reported that teenagers in upcoming years will "experience an annual one million pregnancies, 400,000

abortions and half a million births." Experts are concerned that sexually active teenagers will be the next AIDS "high risk" group.

Considering these facts and others, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and Secretary of Education William Bennett issued a joint statement.

"Education has a fundamental role to play in teaching our young people how to avoid the threat of AIDS."

According to experts what brought Dr. Koop and several other health groups, which joined the crusade at about the same time, to that point is the "pandemic" nature of the AIDS problem for the future. "Only a massive educational campaign and considerable investment in medical research will prevent a catastrophic AIDS epidemic in the U.S.," according to a lengthy report issued by the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine.

"AIDS will definitely change the nature of sex education as we know it" according to Harvey Fineberg, dean of Harvard School of Public Health. "It will lead to more open, explicit discussions about condoms and other strategies for safe sex." "Though some people will be shocked, we are at a point where sex education is no longer a matter of morals-it is a matter of life and death," he said.

Unfortunately, the question of morals is one reason that sex education has drawn opposition in the past. The biggest problem facing sex education today is the subject of values and this cannot be so easily evaded or resolved.

Another area of concern for sex education opponents involves the belief that sex education encourages young people to try sex and that it does

not belong in the schools. Research shows that those who have had a course in sex education are no more likely to be sexually active than those who have not, that females are less likely to become pregnant, and that they are more likely to use contraceptives.

"Eighty-three percent of Americans favor sex education in the schools," according to a 1983 Roper Poll. Yet less than 10 percent of American school children are exposed to anything approaching a good sex education. All it takes is three or four opponents in almost any community and the sex education program is finished, because school boards are overly responsive to these extremists.

While opponents of sex education are quick to find fault with placing the burden of teaching sex in the schools, these opponents have not yet found another viable solution. A 1986 Time Magazine poll showed that "Adults do not think they are doing a very good job teaching their children about the facts of life: 69 percent of 1,015 Americans polled... "said parents are not doing as much as they should to educate their children about sex: 39 percent of the parents who were polled admit they have had 'frank and open' discussions about sex with their teenagers on a few times or not at all."

Clearly, the time has come for educators to take the lead in protecting the young people of this nation. The tragedies connected with AIDS and teenage pregnancy are life-threatening and life-changing. Without sex education young people are forced to face these problems unprepared. Teen pregnancy and AIDS are high prices to pay for ignorance.

by Johnny Reid
staff writer

Feedback

"What are you doing this summer?"

"I will go to New Jersey." Dena-Jennette, Freshman

"I will go to my loved one." Lionel Reynolds, Sophomore

"I plan to travel to Louisiana to attend a NAACP and SCLC convention." Darrell Roche Roberson, Sophomore

"Work and chill out." Dexter Moore, Junior

"This summer I am going to summer school, the whole summer." Gregory Cross, Junior

"I plan to go home to Harrisburg, Pa. and work. I also plan to attend the Greek Picnic in Philadelphia and hang out at the Baltimore Harbor." Deborah Carr, Junior

"My plans for this summer are to work and enjoy each day as I relax and take a vacation to prepare for my return in the fall." Lori Perkins, Sophomore

"I plan to attend summer school, work out, and get a job while I'm here. I also plan to enjoy myself to the fullest, and meet new people." Shelia Johnson, Freshman

"I am going to marry a great young man, but unfortunately I also have to attend summer school." Renae Mallory, Sophomore

"I plan to attend summer school, have a part-time job, and...Be a beach bunny!" Michele Watson, Sophomore

"I plan to attend summer school and hold down my position at a local retail store. I will also do some extensive traveling thereafter." Lisa Gregory, Sophomore

"I plan to relax and ease my mind, and recuperate from the last two semesters at ECSU." Wilshawnda T. Sirmans, Freshman

"I hope to go to Williamsburg, Va. to Busch Gardens to see the dance show, especially one of the dancers. If not, I pray I'm employed and making more than \$3.35." M.D. Johnson, Freshman

"This summer I plan to work with the N.C. Government Intern Program." Angela Bell, Senior

"I plan to attend a summer program in one of the following places: Mexico, Hampton or California if I am excepted. If not then I will get a summer job in my hometown, Elizabeth City and I will also work on some readings and scientific papers to enrich my knowledge." Bonnie Cuffie, Sophomore

"I plan to work in a business oriented environment and to prepare myself for the upcoming school year by visiting different business firms. I will also be taking a break from the hustle and bustle of the 1986/87 year." Tammie Lee, Sophomore

"I hope to obtain an entry level accounting position with the government in the very near future. In the mean time I'm open to any accounting position." Reba Twine, Graduating Senior

"Sleep on the Beaches of S.C. and pretend that I'm in Jamaica." Norman Currie, Sophomore

"I plan to gather my thoughts about graduate or MED school, while participating in one of the many research programs I have applied for." Tracey Green, Junior

The Solution

puzzle on p.7

A	A	R	A	R	I	S	E	P	A	C
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The Compass

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