

# Project Turnaround Gives First-Time Drug Offenders Second Chance at Living

BY CHARLEEN GRAHAM  
STAFF WRITER

After several months of planning, the Chapel Hill Police Department, in conjunction with the district attorney's office, recently began a new project that will possibly decrease the number of repeat drug charges tried in the county court system.

Project Turnaround, which officially started in January of this year, is a one-year program in which first-time, nonviolent drug offenders are given a chance to receive drug treatment and have their charges cleared, said the program's director, Bill Cozart. Participants are given an opportunity to steer away from a common pattern. When drug offenders do not receive substance abuse treatment, they often return to commit the same or similar drug offenses once they're out of jail, Cozart said.

A participant in the program who was charged with first-time cocaine possession said the project has given him a chance to turn his life around and stay out of jail.

"I was originally pretty reluctant about entering the program, but am now really glad I have this second chance," said the participant, who remained anonymous under the program's privacy guarantee. The participant has been in the program since March and now just attends the weekly Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

The participant said the NA meetings were important in drug rehabilitation, because the group is such a strong support system. The participant maintains a full time job, working between 45 and 55 hours a week and said that keeping busy with a job had also helped to focus on life.

Orange-Chatham District Attorney Carl Fox said the main goal of the program was "to provide drug dependency treatment for first-time drug offenders so that they are not so likely to repeat the same offense."

A minimum of four weeks in the program is spent in drug treatment. Participants meet three times a week, for more than three hours each meeting. There they receive group counseling by two certified substance abuse counselors.

One meeting out of the week is done with the local Narcotics Anonymous chapter, and participants are taught the group's

philosophy of substance dependency. They also meet and talk with fellow substance dependants who often act as support for each other. After the minimum four weeks, individuals come back for at least two more meetings.

Cozart said the project was originally designed for those individuals charged with first time drug possession or use charges.

Participants of Project Turnaround enter the program upon an agreement with the district attorney. They are required to complete a period of drug treatment, and to participate in and pass random urinalysis tests, Cozart said.

If they are not high school graduates, they must either remain in school to complete their degree or get a GED. If they've already graduated, they must seek and find full-time employment, he said.

If participants comply with all program requirements for six months, they go back to court, and their name is removed from the court docket. However, the person is required to continue participation in the project for another six months and maintain contact with the program director, Cozart said.

If for any reason the participant fails to comply with the requirements of the program, his name is put back into the court docket and the process begins over again, he added.

After completing a year in Project Turnaround, clients can then have their charges expunged. The project is geared mainly towards those with felony offenses, but first-time misdemeanor charges can be dropped, too, Cozart said. He said the program had 41 active participants, exceeding the amount originally expected at the beginning of the project in January.

Cozart said he was hoping the county would provide the necessary funds to continue the program after its two-year starting grant from the Governor's Crime Commission ran out.

The county received \$64,000 from the commission and matched 25 percent of that to start the program, Cozart said. The project employs two full-time staff members and is expected to spend approximately \$12,000 annually for drug treatment costs, he said.

planning process with the University," council member Pat Evans said. The University would not take the chance of ruining their relations with the town by building a high-rise building on the land now, Evans said.

"We have received assurances from them; it's now our time to do the same," she said. The rezoning would be a statement of mistrust of the University, she added.

There was no protest petition filed by anyone from UNC against the rezoning, town council member Joe Capowski said. The deadline for the petitions was last Wednesday.

"We do recognize that this would be a temporary rezoning, and we look forward to working with the University to make permanent rezoning plans," Capowski said.

The southernmost part of the property is the other section to be rezoned and is the only portion of the area that is developed, other than the airport and the town's Public Works-Transit facilities.

A complication to the issue is that part of the property lies in the Joint-Planning Transition Area, where Chapel Hill shares jurisdiction with Orange County. Members of the council questioned the town's right to rezone the land that lay in this area of the property.

# Students in Limbo Linger Around Chapel Hill

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STAFF WRITER

The results of the 1993 Employment Survey elicited by University Career Services show that 64.7 percent of 1993 graduates were employed full time and 22.3 percent continued their education.

However, many UNC graduates find themselves lingering in Chapel Hill, harassed somewhere between these choices.

A common example of this type of graduate is the aspiring medical school student. Ryan Wanamaker, who graduated from UNC in May with a bachelor's degree in biology, found himself in this position after not being accepted by any of his potential schools. Many are forced to delay their plans for whatever reason, he said.

He said being on the waiting list was positive but that it was also inconvenient because your life was put on hold. Wanamaker, who graduated Phi Beta Kappa, applied to five medical schools and hoped to be accepted for this fall.

Unable to carry out his original plans, Wanamaker opted to take the year off, schoolwise. He waits tables at Grady's restaurant and lives in Chapel Hill. "I can't

imagine any place I'd rather be," he said.

Although Wanamaker encourages medical school applicants to attend directly out of undergraduate school, he has turned this transition into a positive experience. He said he had gained a sense of adult responsibility, maturity and focus. Not doing schoolwork for a year is also a nice break, he said. However, it is difficult knowing what you really want to study and not being able to do it, he said. "This year is solidifying my desire to go to medical school," he added. "It takes patience."

Wanamaker's biggest complaint about staying in town is dealing with the habitually asked question, "Didn't you graduate already?" He said that he senses an alienation from much of campus life. "You're not really part of the group," he said.

Ashley Parker, who also graduated in May, with a degree in chemistry, found himself in a similar situation. He said waiting for the decisions from medical schools as late as May had inhibited his search for alternatives for the ensuing year.

After job hunting during the summer, Parker accepted a position as a research assistant with the University. His interest in this work and improving his medical

school application are benefits, he said.

Aside from the many research opportunities in the Triangle, Parker found many reasons for residing in Chapel Hill. "I wanted to be in this area because I'm accustomed to the environment," he said.

This eliminates a transition period necessary to get used to a new setting, he said.

He said he continued to enjoy the social environment Chapel Hill provided on the weekends. Parker views this year in Chapel Hill, not necessarily as a transition stage, but as a pursuit in which he has a vested interest. "You shouldn't think of it as a stepping stone; you won't get anything out of it," Parker said. "I'm not going to regret this year at all. There are things you can draw from every experience in life."

Brian Downs, who graduated Phi Beta Kappa from UNC in 1994 with a degree in history, also aspires to attend medical school. He said staying in Chapel Hill was a matter of choice. His desire to get real world experience before going to school motivated his decision to wait a year before applying to medical school, he said.

"Once you start medical school, you're locked in for four years," Downs said. He said that diving into the job field would

increase his appreciation for being a medical school student.

Downs has taken advantage of job experiences through internships around the Triangle. He is employed at an insurance company, where he has endured working 40 hours a week. Working has reinforced his decision to go to medical school.

"Living in Chapel Hill offered me the best of everything," Downs said. "Internships offer temp work, and there's the opportunity to go back to school. Plus, my friends are here — that's another bonus."

Like Wanamaker and Parker, Downs sometimes feels like a student but is aware of the alienation from undergrad life. Seeing students with backpacks on Franklin Street increases that feeling. "You're out of that routine but still close to it."

Downs is not disturbed by being in a state of limbo. However, he advised that taking a year off was not the best decision for everyone. "A lot of people get stressed out and are a little insecure," he said.

Belonging to a specific group offers a certain sense of security, Downs said. In situations such as his, "You're not quite a student and not quite a professional, but halfway in between."

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### TRACT

FROM PAGE 1

The Planning Board looks at the impact on the community as a whole, such as the environmental and transportation effects. Based on the land-use plan, they then suggest a zoning, Rody said.

The University administration and the Board of Trustees feel that they have given the town assurances that they will not build prematurely on the undeveloped land, said Wayne Jones, UNC's vice chancellor for business and finance.

"The University feels it has no need to rezone the property until its use has been determined," Jones said. After all of their assurances to the town, Jones believed the Board of Trustees would be unhappy about a premature zoning reaction by the town.

"In general, I don't view this as a hostile maneuver on the town's part to do this rezoning," council member Mark Chilton said. The town would merely be exercising its lawful authority and acting responsibly, and the action is post-mature, rather than premature as Jones expressed, Chilton said.

Town council member Pat Evans said the rezoning would be inappropriate at this time.

"I think that three years ago it was post-mature, but now we are entering a joint-

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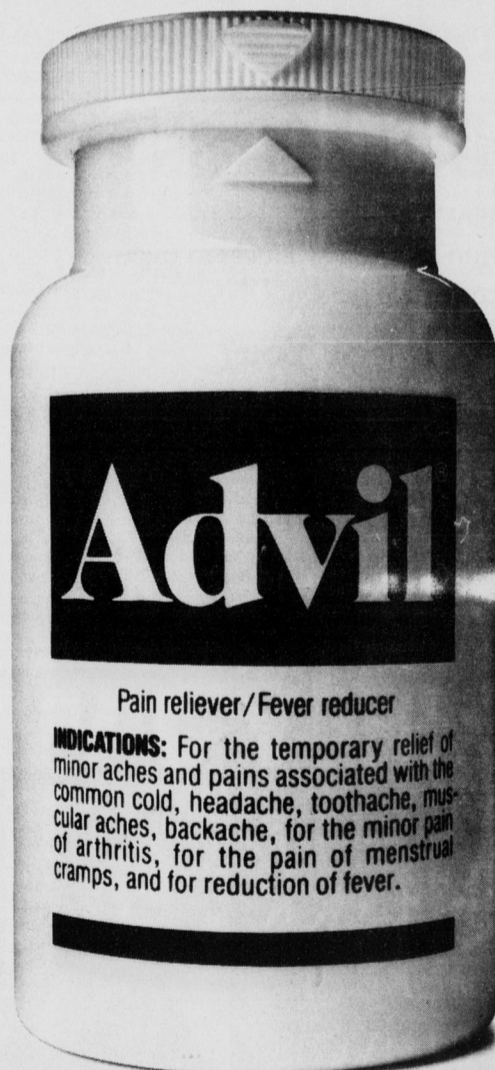
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