

There was not a dry eye in the house as Straight kids/parents held reunion

By Diane R. Stepp
Staff Writer

Even Princess Diana's *savoir-faire* must have slipped a bit at witnessing an emotional reunion of parents and their drug-dependent children during the recent royal visit.

The encounter at an adolescent drug rehabilitation program in suburban Washington was shared by the princess, her hostess, Nancy Reagan, and — thanks to satellite television — by Cobb judicial, edu-

cation and community leaders.

Local Straight board member Carolyn Duncan organized the luncheon designed to focus attention on the urgency of the drug and alcohol dependency problem and the successes of Straight, Inc., a unique drug treatment program for youngsters ages 12-21.

"It really, really works," said Atlanta Straight director Robbie Robertson. Its 65-percent success rate is considered the best in the nation, he said. "It's about kids



Duncan

helping kids, parents helping parents, and families helping families," he said.

Princess Diana sent word prior to her visit that she wanted to see how the United States is dealing with the drug problem. The Straight program was Mrs. Reagan's best answer.

Outside of the Washington area there are seven Straight programs nationwide. Cobb has one of them. Others are in Florida, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan.

Last week, more than 100 guests had lunch at Straight headquarters on Austell Road in Marietta and awaited the telecast of Princess Diana and Mrs. Reagan's visit to Cobb's sister Straight program in Springfield, Va.

Not long after the English trifle was finished in Smyrna, a satellite dish brought Cobb's Straight visitors into a room 600 miles away where nervous self-confessed "drugies" — some of them as young as 12 — sat across a hall, facing their parents, many for the first time since being admitted to the program.

Many of the youngsters had been tricked by their parents to get

them there in the first place. Some had come "screaming and kicking," according to the announcer, who emphasized the enormity of the chemical dependence problem. One out of every 10 people is affected by drugs or alcohol, he said.

Now, the youngsters stood before their parents in Alcoholic Anonymous fashion laying out their lives, past and future, while other teens facing the same battle and the 24-year-old princess listened.

"I'm Lonnie and I'm 12 years old. I've done pot, alcohol, PCP, cocaine, hash, and valiums and LSD. I ran away from home and passed out. I've been free of drugs for five days. I feel ashamed and it's scary to think about. I have a pretty bad drug problem and want help."