

Nancy Reagan begins journey to battle drugs

The Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Smiling schoolchildren greeted Nancy Reagan today, singing "Hello Nancy" as she began a two-day tour of facilities that deal with childhood drug abuse.

Mrs. Reagan, wearing an oatmeal-colored jacket with red trim over a brown and red pleated dress, smiled and waved at the welcoming children who sang "Hello Nancy" to the tune of "Hello Dolly" when she entered the Pinellas Park Elementary School. The school runs classes for 9- to 12-year-olds with potential drug problems and also has a behavior modification program for teenagers.

It was Mrs. Reagan's second major trip since her husband became president — the first was to the royal wedding in England last summer — and the first lengthy swing devoted to a substantive issue. She returns to the White House Tuesday night after a stop in Dallas.

Mrs. Reagan's plane departed Andrews Air Force Base about 10 a.m. for Florida.

Mrs. Reagan planned visits to drug treatment centers today in Tampa and St. Petersburg, Fla.

The journey was preceded by an unusual briefing for reporters accompanying the first lady, complete with a film about one of the drug programs she is visiting.

The president's wife has blamed the drug problem partially on permissive parents. Yet she also has acknowledged that she believes her two grown children "probably smoked marijuana at one time or another."



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NANCY REAGAN: Returns from weekend trip with president.