

School board member becomes STRAIGHT liaison

Carolyn Duncan sees program as an alternative for kids who are faced with drug woes

By Susan Howard
Staff Writer

Until two weeks ago Carolyn Duncan was still a homemaker. But after she stepped down from her position as chairman of the Cobb County Board of Education, Mrs. Duncan found another outlet for her spare time by accepting a position as Director of Family Services for STRAIGHT, Inc. in Marietta.

Since taking the new position, Mrs. Duncan has become the community liaison for the drug rehabilitation center which she said is "dear to my heart." She remains an elected member of the Cobb school board.

Lately STRAIGHT has been the subject of some negative publicity including a "60 Minutes" show which depicted a drug rehabilitation center in Florida as an institution that physically abused young people in the program and held them for rehabilitation against their will.

"My position was not formed as a rebuttal for negative reports about STRAIGHT," Mrs. Duncan said. "Of course we have people who are unhappy being here and we have families who withdraw their children from the program, but those people usually do not want to make a strong commitment toward our efforts here."

Despite negative reports, Mrs. Duncan remains dedicated to STRAIGHT and its cause of freeing youths from drug-dependent lives. "My son is in his second year of college and has the reputation at school of being a straight, upright and responsible person," she said.

"A few years I couldn't have said that about him. Now I can and it's that feeling that makes working with STRAIGHT worthwhile," she said.

Her position allows her meet with parents, community leaders, PTAs, clergy, probation officers, doctors



Carolyn Duncan — STRAIGHT dear to her

and other groups to give them information about STRAIGHT and the opportunities it provides for drug-dependent young people.

"I meet with the community to let them know

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there's a viable alternative for children with a drug problem," she said.

Mrs. Duncan is no stranger to STRAIGHT as her oldest son was enrolled in the program a few years ago. One of the persons that helped to bring a STRAIGHT center to the Atlanta area, Mrs. Duncan is prepared with various facts and statistics about rampant drug use among teen-agers.

Such facts are also peppered with information about her family's experience with her son's previous drug problem. "People need to know that I had a child who was involved in drugs," Mrs. Duncan said. "Parents who know this find it easier to talk to me about problems they're having with their child."

Talks with parents and other members of the community gives Mrs. Duncan a reason to believe that drug problems for young people are not confined to the schools. "It's a community and family problem," she said. "When children get involved with drugs they automatically start to withdraw from their family."

Besides discussing STRAIGHT with the public, Mrs. Duncan has also become well-versed in talking to the public about the warning signs of drug use and about STRAIGHT's efforts to help drug using teens "to get their self-respect back."