

Anti-drug group likes tone of Reagan television speech

By David K. Secrest
Staff Writer

Straight Inc., a non-profit drug treatment organization for youths, announced plans this morning to re-emphasize a community approach to battle drug abuse.

In a news conference in Cobb County, Straight officials said the key is to fight "the negative peer pressure of (young) friends doing drugs" through involvement of the family and the community.

The director of the metro Atlanta program, based in Marietta, said he was pleased to hear the tone of President Reagan's approach as outlined in a speech Sunday night.

"I was most impressed with President Reagan's announcement and his message to the families that

this is something we all must get involved with," said Ross Rohde.

The news conference at the Northwest Hilton was one of eight around the country this morning timed to coincide with Reagan's anti-drug offensive.

Straight, headquartered in St. Petersburg, Fla., and celebrating its 10th anniversary this month, has treated more than 4,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 24.

The local branch of the organization has 35 staff and para-professionals, Rohde said.

The organization already has tried to work through schools, community organizations and families, but will emphasize that effort again to battle drug abuse, he said.

"Straight's mandate to treat substance-abusing young people and

their families must go beyond merely ministering to the casualties of the drug war," Rohde said.

A recent survey of 79 youths who had gone through the metro Atlanta program showed that 50 percent first tried drugs by age 12, two-thirds eventually tried cocaine, 70 percent had been suspended from school, barely one-third had the opportunity of taking drug-education courses in school and more than 60 percent used drugs for a year or more before parents became suspicious.

Straight offers a 24-hour telephone line for drug problems and emphasizes its low-cost treatment services: "\$18 per day as compared to \$350-\$500 at other centers in this area," Rohde said.

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