

## Anti-drug group urges community approach to combat abuse

*Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA) (Published as The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution) - September 16, 1986*

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- Edition: The Atlanta Constitution
- Section: LOCAL NEWS
- Page: A/8

Straight Inc., a non-profit drug treatment organization for youths, announced plans Monday 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 news conference at the Northwest Hilton was one of eight around the country Monday timed to coincide with President Reagan's anti-drug offensive.

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The organization also released results of a survey of 79 youths who had gone through the metro Atlanta program. The study 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.

A national study done by Straight in eight states reflected similar results.

In the national survey, 46 percent of the youngsters said they were under 12 1/2 when they started using drugs. More than two-thirds said they have used cocaine, more than double the number in a similar survey last year.

The survey was done Sept. 5 on 880 youths aged 12 to 21 who were being treated at Straight Inc.'s eight centers, including the one in Marietta, said James Murray, director of the New England center of the non-profit rehabilitation program.

Of those youths, 69 percent said they had used cocaine, compared with 27.6 percent questioned in a 1985 survey of Straight youngsters and 7.1 percent in 1984.

The survey results were similar at all of the centers, Murray said:

An overwhelming majority of those surveyed admitted they were involved in crimes, whether or not they had been caught or arrested.

Ninety-five percent said they had committed misdemeanors.

Sixty percent admitted to felonies.

Ninety-seven percent had shoplifted.

One hundred percent had been involved in vandalism.

The director of the metro Atlanta program 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.

President and Mrs. Reagan, in a joint address, pledged to raise to \$3 billion the federal spending against illegal drugs and called upon the courage of the American people in waging what he described as "another war for our freedom."

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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 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. "We are convinced through what we have learned in treating young people and families that we can help them prevent the problem."

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- *Index terms:* Drugs; Health; Organizations; Children; Aid; Atlanta
  - *Record:* 860903384
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