



Photographer ROBERT DICKERSON

First Lady Nancy Reagan hugs a youth during a visit Monday night to the Straight Inc. drug rehabilitation center in Clermont County.

## First lady says commitment proved

By Janet Walsh  
Post Staff Reporter

When her husband first became president, Nancy Reagan got a lot of ink in the press about her lavish gowns and taste in china.

Today, the headlines the first lady generates in Cincinnati and other cities center on far more important concerns—the problem of drug abuse among the nation's teens.

Mrs. Reagan, who spent almost three hours Monday night at a drug treatment center near Milford listening to adolescents and their parents tell wrenching tales of drug dependency, insisted in an interview in her Westin Hotel suite this morning that she's had the same concerns all along.

"Maybe it was a process of getting to know me," said Mrs. Reagan softly, when asked about the stories that tended to

portray her as an uncaring socialite preoccupied with matters no more pressing than dinner parties.

Now, she believes, people understand how strongly committed she is to promoting awareness of drug abuse. In the past four years, she's traveled to 29 cities in her campaign to fight drug abuse—including her visit Monday night to the Straight Inc. drug treatment center in the Clermont County village of Mt. Repose.

Mrs. Reagan, moved to tears during that visit, invited a 15-year-old former Cincinnati drug user who "graduated" from Straight to accompany her to Indianapolis to share her experiences at the high school the first lady was to visit after leaving Cincinnati. That offer was accepted enthusiastically.

But Straight Inc.'s strict rules, peer pressure (which Straight claims helps get kids into drugs in the first place) and its

highly structured program are not without controversy. The non-profit drug rehabilitation program, which operates three other treatment facilities besides the local center, has been the target of lawsuits and drawn criticism by the American Civil Liberties Union for alleged "brainwashing" of its clients.

Asked about the controversies surrounding Straight, Mrs. Reagan said, "I don't push one method or another, one group or another. My main purpose in life is to make people aware (of the drug problem)."

Mrs. Reagan said she's not sure why adolescent drug abuse continues to be such a problem in the United States, despite improved information about the issue. She said the problem is especially disturbing to parents because there's no real pattern to where it occurs—it even happens in "very loving families who've done everything they should do."