



Photograph by 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 issues call to youths

By Nancy Berlier
Post Staff Reporter

MT. REPOSE — First lady Nancy Reagan left some memories in this small Clermont County village Monday night.

Some of the 180 young people in the Straight Inc. drug rehabilitation program will remember it as the night Mrs. Reagan hugged them.

Others will remember that she was there when they finally announced they would be "coming home", and ran across a crowded room for tearful embraces with their parents.

And many of them will remember the message delivered by the wife of the president of the United States.

"Life can be so wonderful and so fulfilling and so happy if you can give it a chance," Mrs. Reagan said. "We need you, and

we need you badly. You are the ones that are going to be taking over this world... but we need you clear-eyed and clear-minded. We only make this trip once, I think. Let's make it count."

Mrs. Reagan's visit to Straight Inc. was one of five stops on a two-day tour to promote awareness of drug abuse. She arrived at Lunken Airport Monday afternoon—in a blue and white Air Force C-9 jet dubbed Executive One—after a visit to Lansing, Mich. She was scheduled to fly to Indianapolis this morning.

After addressing the young people in Straight's program at Mt. Repose Monday night, she turned her attention to the parents assembled there.

"I know there's no hurt that a parent could be given that could equal the hurt that a child gives you," she said. "It's a very,

very special hurt, and you feel, as they said tonight, you feel so helpless. I know many of you feel that you've done something wrong, but I'm proud of you, too, because you've had the courage to go through this and give your children the support that they need."

Although Mrs. Reagan left memories with those who attended the meeting, she undoubtedly took some more with her.

Mrs. Reagan arrived at Straight shortly after 6 p.m. She met briefly with the staff members, most of whom are counselors who themselves attended the program. The young people sang fast, upbeat songs like "Straight is It," sung to the tune of "Coke is It," as Mrs. Reagan and parents filed into the meeting room.

She listened to a selected

group of young people give testimonials about their experiences with drugs and witnessed an emotional exchange between parents and their children as a microphone was passed from one parent to another.

The first lady was vigorously applauded for her participation in the program, was awarded a bronze medal of one child reaching out to another for her work in promoting drug abuse awareness and was serenaded with a song called "Since Straight's Been Here."

The song was written by six young people in the program in preparation for her visit.

Just before leaving the meeting at 9 p.m., she walked over to the front row of Straight's young people and hugged each of them.

"I love you all," she told them.