

RICHARDSON TEEN TALKS AT SEMINAR ABOUT DRUG USE

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RICHARDSON -- Brian ██████████, 16, a student at Berkner High School, said he came to a seminar on drug abuse at J.J. Pearce High School Sunday because he had a bad experience on LSD and wanted to get help to quit drugs.

But according to a director of an adolescent drug treatment center who spoke at the seminar, many students like Brian are often unwilling to admit they have a problem with drugs. And still more parents refuse to face the reality of drugs in their schools and communities.

"Every time a young person does drugs, the brain perceptibly moves toward a wall of addiction or alcoholism. Once it's crossed, there's no going back," said Bill Oliver, executive director of Straight Foundation Inc., a chain of drug treatment centers throughout the nation.

"And many young kids just cannot deal with this and don't face up to their drug problem."

"That's what Richardson Families in Action is all about," said Betty Manning, 54, a volunteer and member of the non-profit group established in 1980.

"We want to find every avenue possible to help these kids and their parents get help. We talk with them and let them know someone cares and that there are treatment centers and ways to get help," she said.

The group works with schools, civic organizations and local businesses on programs to educate parents, youth, teachers and citizens on the dangers and consequences of drug and alcohol abuse, Mrs. Manning said.

The group, with the Richardson school district, sponsored Sunday's seminar, which offered a demonstration by teachers of crisis intervention. The program involves teams of teachers, coaches and administrators who contact parents of students experiencing drug problems in school and recommends suitable alternatives, such as professional counseling, said a school official.

The program is in its second year, Mrs. Manning said, and plans are being made to expand into junior high schools.

"Out of every 100,000 adolescents, 10,000 of them are addicted to drugs. I think this nation is grossly underreacting to the drug problem," Oliver said. "We're here to raise the community's awareness -- not to the problem of drugs, but of the fact that something good is happening in Richardson and people here can be a part of it."

"I don't want to be associated with drugs anymore," said Brian, the Berkner student. "I've seen friends freak out on stuff and I don't want to be next. I'm glad somebody's doing something to help."

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