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Straight, Inc. Brimmer Inquiry 5/7/92

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
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Bush Presidential Library Photocopy

Cynthia Smallwood
887-7345
ABC 6/10/92
Research

Document Originally
Attached to
Following Page

May 8, 1992

TALKING POINTS ON STRAIGHT INC.

- Daily Point of Light designation is a recognition, not an award that can be retracted. The DPOL receives a letter signed personally by the President on his stationary.

DPOLs are selected for their volunteer efforts to solve serious social problems and address environmental concerns, not for financial contributions, fundraising, or strictly advocacy activities.

- All DPOLs undergo an FBI background check which will reveal any outstanding warrants, arrests, indictments, convictions.
- Generally, the groups honored are the volunteers as a whole, or an outstanding volunteer within an organization.
- DPOL has never designated a national organization, although local chapters and volunteers have been named DPOLs: Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, CASA, LVA, Boys & Girls Clubs, etc. . . precisely, because the quality of the programs varies from one locale to the other. Obviously, some organizations use the talents and resources of their volunteers more effectively in serving the needs of the community.
- Straight, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that relies on volunteer strength and support. Inevitably, all nonprofit organizations have prominent representatives from business, community leaders, and government officials on their board of directors, steering committees, or advisory councils.
- The Brimmers are honored for their commitment to helping young adults, adolescents, and their families in overcoming and coping with alcohol and drug abuse. Their dedication is well documented: transporting clients to physician appointments (100 hours), providing guidance and emotional support to families (200 hours), and responding to other programmatic needs and maintenance (500 plus hours). The Brimmers' interests are not confined to Straight. They work in conjunction with local chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- There have been no allegations or inquiries about the Brimmers or Straight, Inc. of Pinellas County Florida.

- 5/8 gave copy to Laura Melillo
○ Zappalla resigned position w/straight, Inc. in 1989.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
UNTIL JANUARY 1, 1992

December 30, 1991

The President today recognized Susan and Terry Brimmer of St. Petersburg, Florida, as the 656th Daily Point of Light for the Nation. Mr. and Mrs. Brimmer, 48 and 44, devote their time to helping adolescents who suffer from substance and alcohol abuse.

In 1987, the Brimmers became involved with Straight, a program for teens who are drug/alcohol abusers and their families when their son became a client. After their son's graduation from Straight, the Brimmers continued to volunteer over 15 hours a week with both parents and children.

Through the "Parent Intake" program, the Brimmers help parents enroll their child in the Straight program and adjust to the shock of having a child with drug and/or alcohol addictions. They share their own experiences with other parents during "Parent Weekends" which usually occur four times a year and "Awareness Rap" sessions where they encourage parents to be directly engaged in their child's recovery.

Since many teens who participate in Straight are from other cities, volunteer "host families" take children into their homes for the duration of the program, which usually lasts at least one year. The Brimmers have hosted over 76 children in 14 months. They have legally adopted one of the boys who stayed at their home during his recovery. After the children graduate from the Straight program and move away, the Brimmers still keep in touch with them and see them often.

Mr. Brimmer drives patients to outside support meetings such as Alcoholics Anonymous once a week. He often treats them to bowling, a movie, or dinner either before or after their meetings. The Brimmers and the teens they help are dedicated to increasing public awareness of drug and alcohol abuse among teens and they participate in speaking engagements where they discuss prevention, signs of abuse, and their experiences with the Straight program from both the parent's and child's perspectives.

The President salutes Susan and Terry Brimmer for exemplifying his belief that, "From now on in America, any definition of a successful life must include serving others."

#

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tracey Taylor or Miah Homstad
Susan and Terry Brimmer (202) 456-6266
1542 86th Avenue, North
St. Petersburg, Florida 33702
(813) 287-8369

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STRAIGHT

Helen Gowanny, M. Ed.
Administrator

November 13, 1991

Ms. Amy Sylvester
Office of National Service
Room 100
White House
Washington D.C. 20500

RE: Terry and Susan Brimmer
1542 96th Avenue North
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
Telephone: (813) 576-2361

Dear Ms. Sylvester:

I am writing in reference to our conversation of November 6, 1991 regarding our outstanding volunteers, Susan and Terry Brimmer. Mr. and Mrs. Brimmer have been involved with Straight for the past three years.

The Straight treatment program is based on a philosophy of peer support which means kids helping kids, parents helping parents, and families helping families under the supervision of trained professionals. The main objectives of treatment are the revitalization of the family and helping the young person to recapture a productive, meaningful, and drug free life.

Because of our non-profit status, we rely on people in the community such as the Brimmers to donate their valuable time and charity serving as excellent role models to our families in treatment. In the past few years, they have given of their energy, time and money. It is the thoughtfulness and concern of generous individuals such as the Brimmers which helps make our services available to more troubled families in our area.

JCAHO Accredited
Straight, Inc. • 3001 Gandy Blvd. • St. Petersburg, FL 33702 • Pinellas (813) 577-6044
A family oriented treatment program for drug using young people.

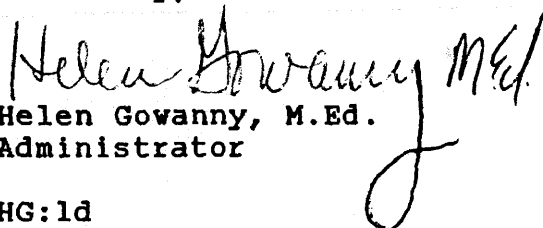
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Ms. Amy Sylvester
Page 2

Included among the outstanding projects which have been undertaken by the Brimmers are helping to transport clients to physician appointments (100 hours), providing emotional guidance and support to new parents who enter the Straight program (200 hours), grant writing requests (300 hours) and organizing various fund raising events (600 hours).

It is without hesitation and with great honor that I forward Terry and Susan Brimmer for consideration for the President's 1000 Points of Light award. Thank you for contacting me regarding this prestigious tribute. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (813) 577-6011.

Sincerely,


Helen Gowanny, M.Ed.
Administrator

HG:ld

DATE: 5/7/92

TO:

NAME: Paul McNeil

COMPANY: White House - Media

PHONE# 202/456-7500

FAX: 202/456-2618

FROM:

NAME: Rachel Young

DEPARTMENT: News

PHONE# 813/873-1686

FAX# 813/871-3135

MESSAGE:

Hope this comes through better!

Paul

13 Eyewitness News
YOUR 24 HOUR NEWS SOURCE.

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Eyewitness News

May 6, 1992

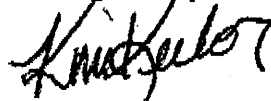
Dear Mr. Marlin Fitzwater:

This is request by WTVT for a formal response from your office on behalf of President Bush, to the questions posed in our letter, being sent under separate cover. Please fax or mail your response to Kim Keelor to the number or the address below.

We are more than happy to send a crew to your office for a tape statement at your convenience. If that is not possible, a formal written statement on official letterhead paper would be appreciated.

Thanks for your prompt response, I know you're swamped right now.

Best regards,



Kim Keelor
WTVT
P.O. Box 31113
Tampa, Florida 33631-3113
813/878-9888
FAX: 813/871-3135

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WTVT Television

3213 W. Kennedy Blvd. P.O. Box 31113 Tampa, Florida 33631-3113 813/876-1313



MAY-07-1992 12:39 FROM 13 EYEWITNESS NEWS TO 12024566218 P.02

TO: Mr. Marlin Fitzwater
Press Secretary

FROM: Kim Keelor
Reporter WTVT
P.O. Box 31113
Tampa, Florida 33631-3113
813-870-9754
FAX: 813-871-3133

April 16, 1992

Mr. Fitzwater:

Thanks in advance for your cooperation and efforts in expediting this request.

I've included a portion of some of the deficiencies documented by several state regulatory agencies regarding Straight, Incorporated. This is a small portion of the material I have received. There are many instances of abuse I could relay to you...but one that stands out in my mind more than others involved a child named Ken Moran. He was a client of Straight in Michigan. State investigators say he was denied bathroom privileges for hours, then urinated in his seat, then was restrained by other clients, under the Straight staff's supervision. His face was put in his own urine as a form of punishment. Pat Allen, the director of the Michigan office of substance abuse Services can verify this information (517)335-6023.

The questions we would like addressed to the President are as follows:

Is President Bush aware of the allegations a large number of families are making against Straight, including complaints of abuse and financial improprieties?

Is President Bush aware that a number of states have denied Straight licenses or withdrawn licenses from Straight for reasons including documented cases of child abuse?

If the President is aware of these matters, why does he feel it is important to continue endorsing Straight, his latest endorsement being the "Point of Light" award to the Brimmers in Pinellas county on his last visit to Florida.

If he has not been made aware of this information, what is his reaction and does he plan to withdraw his support from

Bush Presidential Library Photocopy

Finally, the two founders of Straight, Incorporated, Joseph Zappala and Melvin Sembler serve as the Ambassadors to Spain and Australia at the President's appointment. We know they each donated \$100,000 to the President campaign in 1988. How much have they donated to Mr. Bush's re-election campaign? How much have they donated through soft accounts? For example, we've documented that Mr. Sembler donated \$15,000 on January 14, 1991 to the Republican National Committee.

Critics accuse Mr. Bush of basing his endorsement of Straight on his relationship with these strong Republican supporters. Is this true and if so to what degree?

No, we were not aware of affiliation when naming volunteers! Mr. Fitzwater, we have a crew in Washington, D.C. that can take the responses to these questions early next week. Please contact me on a date and time for the interview.

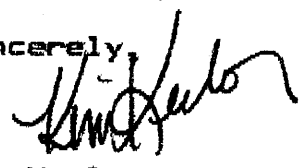
Thank you very much for your cooperation on this matter. We believe the President would not wish to leave these questions unanswered when his involvement in Straight is included in our reports.

Seldom name large organiz.

→ background checks on individuals

Nonprofit presence usually ~~at~~ organization, place of work, etc. - so everyone may share in the honor w/whom affiliated - note AA // rely on volunteer strength

Sincerely,



Kim Keelor

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local chapters: generally seek outstanding

Florida Business 1988

↳ investments founded Straight together

volunteers who are committed to solving S.S. problems

→ with Paul McNeill

5/7 called Doug Davidson - referred to State Dept.

647-3072 Western Europe (desks) * Frank Folger

647-9696 Australia

↳ he is affiliated w/Straight, Inc - in bio

was co-founder 2/5/90 p.r.

" He serves as President of Straight, Inc. "

⊗

647-4372

SERTOMAN

JUNE 1992

For Successful Civic Leaders



One of a Thousand Points of Light

Tampa Sertoma Family Helps "Light" the Way for Troubled Adolescents

Terry and Susan Brimmer of St. Petersburg, Florida, are two ordinary people...doing that special something "extra."

She is a native of Dushore, Pennsylvania, and a long-time account consultant for Val-Pak of Tampa Bay.

He hails from Minneapolis, earned a master's degree in accounting from Florida State University following a four-year stint in the U.S. Air Force, and now is a Certified Public Accountant and partner with Ryals, Brimmer, Burek & Keelan of Tampa.

The couple has children: Matt is 24, Christopher is now 22, and Leslie is 16. John, 23, joined the family four years ago.

So far, an ordinary family, but...

On January 1, 1992, President George Bush recognized this couple as the 656th Daily Point of Light for the Nation.

The President introduced the "Thousand Points of Light" during his inaugural address in 1989. Since then, he recognizes individuals daily, six days a week.

Recognized are those who successfully address pressing social problems through direct and consequential acts of community service: individuals, families, businesses, groups, and organizations of every conceivable type that take successful action to combat drug abuse, illiteracy, inadequate education, environmental decay, homelessness, hunger, AIDS, and other critical issues.

The Brimmers dedicated their lives to helping adolescents who suffer from substance and alcohol abuse.

It all started about four and a half years ago when their 17-year-old son "came to us and asked for help." Addicted, he was in trouble--serious trouble with drugs and the law. But he wanted help.

"He was pretty hopeless," explains the concerned parent.

Down the street is an organization the Brimmers heard about. It's called "Straight." They took Christopher there for help. Little did they realize what the future would bring.

Straight is a non-profit, family-oriented treatment program for drug-using adolescents and their families. It was started by Mel and Betty Sembler of St. Petersburg, currently U.S. Ambassador to Australia. Dr. Robert L. DuPont, founding director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse rates Straight as "the best in the country."

The Straight program is based on the principle of peer support: kids helping kids, parents helping parents, and families helping families under the supervision of trained professionals.

The objective is revitalization of the young person and the family. Straight helps people recapture a productive, meaningful and drug-free life.

When Chris was brought into the program, John was already there. He became a counsellor, a close friend to Christopher, and eventually, an "adopted" member of the Brimmer family.

Straight conducts parent and sibling

sessions in addition to individual and family counseling. The treatment program generally runs 12 to 16 months.

During the treatment phase, parents attend two meetings a week. There is also a quarterly weekend.

Once Christopher graduated from Straight, the Brimmers continued their involvement as volunteers, giving the organization over 15 hours per week to both parents and children.

"We just helped out a lot since Chris and John graduated," explains Terry as he relates the Brimmer story. "We go by the facility four or five times a week and help the kids."

Helping out, explains the 11-year Member of the Tampa



BRIGHT FUTURE--Susan and Terry Brimmer are pictured with a couple of the kids from Straight!

Sertoma Club, means taking some of the kids to Busch Gardens, a football game, bowling, a movie, or maybe it's a barbecue at home. It also means a lot of straight talk.

On Friday nights, you can count on the Brimmers to be directly involved. "We give raps on chemical dependency," Terry says, adding "I don't think I've missed three or four Friday nights in four and half years."

The quarterly weekender "is fairly intensive...strict rules." No nonsense.

Straight has "become a special part of our lives. We've seen some die who haven't finished" [the treatment], Terry remarked. One youngster "decided to leave the program" and was discovered in a car three months later. Another young life lost.

Such a situation, Terry says "motivates us to help even more."

An integral element of the Straight program is the "parent intake" phase.

The Brimmers help parents enroll their child in Straight and also assist in helping them adjust to the shock of having a child with drug and/or alcohol addictions.

They share their own experiences with other parents. The "Awareness Rap" sessions are designed to encourage parents to be directly involved with their child's recovery.

Many teens in the program are from other communities. Thus, the need for "host families."

The Brimmers have hosted over 76 children in their home during a 14-month period. A youngster will usually stay three or four weeks. Some come in for an overnigher. Generally, the Brimmers have six or seven kids from the program staying with them. They've had as many as 16--that was a night when a hurricane struck the area.

The kids come from all parts of the world. They are girls as well as boys. Although the average age is 16-17, the upper level is 21. The youngest: 12 years.

After the children graduate from Straight and move away, the Brimmers still keep in touch with them, and see some often. Their home is open 24 hours a day. The telephone rings any hour of the day or night...the Brimmers are there to respond.

The Brimmers are quiet people. Their mission, however, to create public awareness of drug and alcohol abuse among young people, has been far from silent. They have shared their message, and introduced some of the kids, to nearly 300 organizations, Clubs, churches, parent groups.

Being recognized as "one in a thousand" by the President of the United States is indeed a special experience. After being honored by the White House, this spring, the Brimmers had an opportunity to meet the President when he traveled to Tampa.

"We were invited to the airport along with ten other Points of Light recipients from the area," Brimmer reports. "President Bush got off his plane and spoke to each one of us and thanked us. When he approached us, he noticed the Straight buttons we



The Brimmers have hosted over 76 children during a 14-month period.



were wearing." The President reflected upon the group's vital community work.

As the presidential party continued its local itinerary, the honorees were invited to tour Air Force One. "That was a great experience for all of us," Terry added.

Joining the Tampa Sertoma Club in 1981, Terry has been a regular, dependable Member. In his first year, he earned the GEM Award. Over the years, he has worked many committee assignments, fund raisers, etc...

The Brimmers were not aware of the Points of Light program until the honor was bestowed upon them. Here is their reaction: "It was just a real honor to have a program such as Straight get recognized for pointing out the desperate condition this country is in and the need for increased help in the area of treatment of the disease of chemical dependence.

"Many families need help and can't or won't ask for it. Our reaction was not any type of award for things we really had to do in order to save our son's life and help ourselves and others get through the day to day crisis of growing up," Terry said.

"I hope the Points of Light recognition brings more attention, not to us, but to chemical dependency," Brimmer said, concluding, "I wish I could spend my whole life doing it. There are many people out there who need help!"

Christopher is now doing well. He works for a cable television company and has made many new friends. Life is different and better for him and his family.

In saluting the Brimmers, President Bush noted that "any definition of a successful life must include serving others."