



**Pacific
Institute
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- ① WQED TV PTV - outreach Parent Group presentation
- ② Coloring - Comic Books

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

A Concept Paper

October 1982

- 1) Youth Corp
- 2) Networking with Kids
- 3) Do Away with 800 AP
- 4) Do Away with Gannett

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I. OVERVIEW

This paper outlines the initial phases of **Straight From the Heart**, a bold new idea in drug abuse prevention to be initiated by the Office of the First Lady. The First Lady's commitment to helping youth and families deal with the epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse that threatens the well being of our entire society is already well known, and Mrs. Reagan has made numerous appearances before youth and parent groups. **Straight From the Heart** is different from Mrs. Reagan's past efforts in this area because it directly addresses the needs and concerns of youth themselves. It is based on the premise that the drug abuse epidemic cannot be stopped without the full involvement of young people across the country.

The project summarized here will provide an exciting and lasting legacy enabling youth to inspire, serve, and assist their peers in respecting drug-free lifestyles and in empowering them to create meaningful and constructive alternatives to drug use. More and more young people are looking for facts about the consequences of drug use, actions they can take to help deal with the problem, and leadership from national figures. **Straight From the Heart** will satisfy all three needs and celebrate the triumph of "youth power" in a pursuit traditionally dominated by adults. The project offers a process applicable to many problems of social health, but it can be particularly effective in combatting the threat of drug use to our nation's youth.

This paper describes how the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation can assist Mrs. Reagan and the White House staff in setting up a resource for young people all over America in dealing with and preventing drug abuse. The core of the project will be a toll-free telephone line set up specifically to receive calls from young people who want help. **Straight From the Heart** will not be a crisis hotline, but it will be able to offer a variety of responses. For youth who want to know about drugs and their effects, it will provide information, both over the phone and through printed materials. In emphasizing the prevention of drug problems, however, it will go far beyond this. **Straight From the Heart** will have a staff of concerned, sympathetic professionals, parents, and youth who will be able to follow up the initial telephone calls by helping young people initiate school and community service programs. The project will also be able to provide onsite assistance through a network of prevention professionals and youth who will be prepared to work directly with youth in school and community settings,

helping them to initiate prevention efforts and make them effective.

The project will build on the real successes of youth leaders who have already made their mark in developing positive alternatives to drug abuse. Young people, including many that Mrs. Reagan has met personally, have demonstrated that this can be done. For example:

- o In January 1982, Matt Day and Mark Daly, two teenagers from Palo Alto, California who are members of a group called Youth for Drug Free Alternatives, traveled to Jacksonville, Florida, to help youth in that community learn how to organize drug-free youth groups and promote drug-free social activities.
- o Working as a youth consultant to the Pacific Institute's PYRAMID Project, Gary Gutierrez, of Antonito, Colorado, helped to start three programs for youth in several Texas communities in September 1981. Gary was well prepared for this responsibility through his participation in a national drug abuse prevention program called Channel One. In his own predominantly Hispanic hometown he had helped to restore a 90-year-old community building to become a center for recreational activities for young people.
- o In September 1982, teenager Laura Albrant testified before the U.S. House Select Committee on Aging to describe her work in a youth-organized food cooperative for senior citizens in Rochester, Minnesota.
- o Wes Allen, co-chair of the Alabama Youth Steering Committee, led a presentation by seven youth from Channel One programs throughout Alabama at which Mrs. Reagan was the featured guest. The presentation described how Alabama youth have been weatherizing homes for the elderly, beautifying inner-city areas of Birmingham, restoring historical sites, teaching peer leadership skills, operating child care programs, and participating in many other constructive, drug-free activities.
- o Youth on the Tulalip Indian Reservation, in northwest Washington, produced a film depicting the heritage of their tribe and the challenges it faces today. The result is a hauntingly beautiful depiction of these young Indians' love for the land and the changes to which they must adapt.

By promoting these and similar activities among youth--by giving young people vital information about drugs and then supporting them with meaningful alternatives so that they will not want to be involved with drugs--**Straight From**

the Heart will be a positive and focused response to a deeply rooted, complex problem. Through the prestige of the Office of the First Lady, **Straight From the Heart** will present America with a concept that will be universally respected, that can be easily spread, and that builds on the successful experience of existing drug abuse prevention efforts. At the same time it will challenge the private sector to support and nurture the concept in a creative synergism with government leaders and concerned citizens. It will help to protect the potential greatness of America's youth.

II. BACKGROUND

When the problem of widespread abuse of drugs and alcohol among American youth first received public attention in the 1960s, it seemed to be part of the broader problem of youthful alienation and rebellion associated with a troubled, turbulent decade. Scores of programs were launched throughout the country to deal with the problem, at a cost of many millions of dollars. In retrospect, an important assumption of many of these programs is clear: they shared the mistaken premise that the drug problem among youth was a temporary crisis that could be dealt with through expensive short-term measures. They also shared a naive faith in the power of government-funded programs to solve complex social problems.

Nearly two decades after the youthful drug problem first came to public attention, the intransigence and deep-rootedness of the problem are painfully apparent. Young people in America grow up in an environment in which the widespread use of a variety of licit drugs--alcohol, tobacco, and prescription and over-the-counter drugs--is commonly accepted. They are also exposed to a youth culture in which the use of illicit drugs such as marijuana and cocaine is considered a measure of maturity and adolescent "cool." They are bombarded with conflicting messages--pro-drug messages from the youth culture and the media, on the one hand, and, on the other, messages about the mental and physical dangers of drug use from parents and health authorities. The isolation of young people in a youthful peer culture has exacerbated the problem, for the adolescent peer subculture is the primary context in which young people begin to experiment with and use drugs and alcohol.

Far from being a temporary crisis, the drug problem among youth has long outlived the youth rebellion of the 1960s. Even when young people are opposed to drug use and eager to lead healthy, constructive lives, they recognize that coming to terms with alcohol and drugs has emerged as a new developmental task that all adolescents face as part of the normal process of growing up in contemporary American society. As Mrs. Reagan has said, the drug epidemic "cuts across all classes and colors and is the most democratic of all diseases."

According to the most recent survey of drug use patterns among American youth conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the use of a

variety of drugs among youth is pervasive:

- o One out of every 14 seniors used marijuana on a daily or near daily basis;
- o Two thirds of all seniors (66 percent) reported illicit drug use at some time in their lives;
- o Nearly all high school seniors surveyed had tried alcohol, and 71 percent had used it in the past month;
- o Approximately 71 percent had tried cigarettes, and 29 percent smoked at least some in the past month;
- o One third of the seniors (32 percent) had tried amphetamines without medical supervision, and one sixth (16 percent) had used them in the last month;
- o Alarming percentages had also used a wide variety of other illicit drugs such as PCP, inhalants, tranquilizers, cocaine, barbiturates, LSD, and heroin.

Drug use among American youth is at very high levels both in absolute terms and relative to other countries, the study found. The authors concluded that America has "the highest levels of illicit drug use among young people...in any industrialized nation in the world."*

One measure of hope revealed by the NIDA study was that certain types of drug use among youth have begun to decline after reaching a peak in the last two or three years. Increasingly, the study found, young people are aware of the health hazards of drug use and of growing disapproval of drug use among their parents and their peers. There is some indication, in short, that although the problem is still extremely serious, current Administration policies on supply reduction, new research on the health hazards of drug use, and the growing concern and activism of parents, community leaders, and some youth is beginning to have an impact.

Further Steps Need to Be Taken

There is no reason to be overly optimistic that the progress of recent years will turn the tide of drug use among America's youth. It has been well documented that information about the health hazards of drug use alone, however reliable, is

*Johnston, L.D.; Bachman, J.G.; and O'Malley, P.M. Highlights from Student Drug Use in America, 1975-81. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1981.

not sufficient to change or prevent self-destructive behavior. Moreover, although the activism of concerned parents has been a significant factor and must continue, it can only be one aspect of a broader prevention effort. Many young people typically begin to use drugs at a time when it is normal and healthy for them to develop their own individual identities.

Straight From the Heart is based on the premise that one of the most important influences on the behavior of young people is other young people. Youth need support from their peers for positive, drug-free lifestyles, not just support from adults. They need a mechanism that will help them understand the consequences of drug use for themselves and their peers, and they need to learn that "saying no" is an acceptable alternative to submitting to negative peer pressure. Perhaps most important, they need leadership from concerned adults and from other young people that will help them develop healthy alternatives to drug use--constructive activities in schools and communities, for example, and drug-free social and recreational opportunities.

Straight From the Heart looks toward a future in which drug and alcohol abuse will not be a normal part of growing up--a future in which the norm will be healthy, drug-free youth who are well prepared to be responsible citizens.

The Importance of Mrs. Reagan's Involvement

From its inception **Straight From the Heart** will prominently feature the involvement of the First Lady. It will be a vivid embodiment of the concern expressed in her recent statement to a national parent organization that "Drug abuse is tearing our children and our families apart. Unless we act--now--we may lose our whole next generation to drugs." Her participation will imbue the project with the sense of urgency and national importance that it requires. Moreover, Mrs. Reagan's rapport with young people and her genuine compassion will offer a vivid and highly public message that adults in the highest positions of leadership are eager to help young people help themselves.

III. GOALS AND METHODS

In the context of reducing drug and alcohol abuse among youth, **Straight From the Heart** will have several closely related goals:

- o To respond to young people's concerns about drugs and alcohol by giving them appropriate information and advice;
- o To encourage youth to develop personal and group initiatives for constructive alternatives to drug and alcohol use;
- o To provide resources that will help youth to develop prevention programs in their own schools and communities;
- o To utilize youth as helpers and consultants to other youth and communities;
- o To provide ways for youth, their parents, and other adults to work together in positive drug abuse prevention efforts;
- o To link young people with existing prevention programs in their communities;
- o To develop effective youth leadership for a national drug abuse prevention effort.

Straight From the Heart can have an impact on a variety of other problems that are closely associated with drug and alcohol abuse. When young people become involved in constructive activities they are able to develop a healthy outlook toward life and to formulate realistic long-term goals. It is likely that youth involved in **Straight From the Heart** will not only be less inclined to use alcohol and drugs; they will also turn away from delinquency, disruptive behavior in school, attempted suicides, and other forms of self-destructive behavior. The project can have a significant impact, in short, on all aspects of positive youth development.

METHODS

Straight From the Heart will be established as an independent project administered by a nonprofit organization and supported by contributions from individuals and the private sector. It will be a well publicized and highly visible national leadership organization.

The project's principal mechanism for assisting young people will be a toll-free (800) telephone number that will be accessible to young people at all times,

particularly the out-of-school, evening, and weekend hours when they are most likely to initiate requests for help and information. The project can also maintain a Washington, D.C. post office box in Mrs. Reagan's name to which youth may send letters and requests for information.

A well trained staff sensitive to the needs and concerns of young people will be available to respond to requests. The staff will consist of adults, including concerned parents, and youth.

The staff will be prepared to respond to inquiries for information in a variety of areas including:

- o Drugs and their effects;
- o Ways for young people to get involved in drug abuse prevention programs;
- o Methods for organizing prevention programs in schools and communities;
- o Names, addresses, and phone numbers of potentially helpful individuals and programs both locally and regionally;
- o Print and audiovisual resources for drug information and drug abuse prevention.

The project will develop a systematic process for recording requests and providing appropriate followup services. At a minimum youth who contact the project will receive:

- o A letter from Mrs. Reagan thanking them for their interest and commending their concern in confronting and dealing with the drug problem;
- o Relevant written materials such as information about alcohol and drugs or specific prevention approaches.

In many cases young people are likely to contact the project because they want to initiate some kind of prevention effort in their schools and communities. Initially the staff will respond to these requests by sending specially prepared written materials designed to help young people begin a process of building networks and becoming peer leaders.

It is also likely that youth will need further assistance from the project in launching prevention efforts. In these cases the project will respond by sending highly skilled youth and adult consultants to the requesting community to facilitate program planning, network building, and resource sharing.

All of these services will be provided at no cost to the individual caller.

Straight From the Heart Will Not Be...

Straight From the Heart will not be a crisis hotline. Nor will it be a clearing-house for information about drugs or a referral system so that young people can contact treatment programs. These are services that are more appropriately provided by other kinds of national entities (such as the National Clearinghouse on Drug Abuse Information) and local resources. More important, the principal emphasis of **Straight From the Heart** will be on preventing drug problems among youth before they reach more advanced stages requiring costly treatment. The project will provide a limited range of specially prepared materials designed for a youth audience, and in all its communications with young clients it will stress positive, healthy lifestyles and alternatives to drug use. Where requests are considered outside the main parameters of the project, callers will be referred to the appropriate local, regional, and national resources.

Reaching Out to Youth

Central to the project's success will be its ability to communicate with young people and motivate them to become involved in drug abuse prevention. Mrs. Reagan's active participation in this aspect of the project will be critically important. She will be featured in all the project's initial media messages, announcements, and news releases.

In addition, an important aspect of reaching out to youth will be to use appropriate media and readily understandable messages.

Fortunately, the project will be enhanced by the participation of the Gannett Company, which owns newspapers and radio and television stations throughout the country. Gannett has already developed a logo for the project, and it is likely that Gannett will be available to assist in developing youth-oriented messages for a variety of media. All of these messages will incorporate the project's basic themes:

- o Drug and alcohol abuse have reached epidemic proportions in our country and threaten future generations;
- o Young people are particularly susceptible to drug abuse;
- o "Even your best friends might encourage you to use drugs";
- o "It's all right to say 'no'--you can get more out of life without drugs";
- o There are a number of things that youth can do to counteract drug use--

they don't have to wait for adults to do it for them; they can talk with other young people and concerned adults; they can take action;

- o Youth all over the country are already successfully involved in drug abuse prevention programs--young people can make a difference;
- o The project's toll-free number and post office box are available to receive requests for further information and assistance.

The media messages can also include excerpts from recent documentaries (including those made by Gannett) illustrating such positive developments as:

- o Drug-free parties and other social events promoted and developed by youth;
- o Programs like Channel One in which young people acquire new skills and become actively involved in positive alternatives to drugs;
- o Young people tackling tough problems related to drug use such as gang violence and delinquency;
- o Peer counseling programs in which young people help their friends with positive support and feedback;
- o Programs that help to develop young people's organizational and leadership skills.

In addition to television and radio announcements, the project will develop and disseminate posters and brochures in order to reach the widest possible audience of young people. If appropriate, Mrs. Reagan may wish to visit local communities to help launch the project through public appearances.

To further publicize the project and reach out to concerned young people the media announcements can be followed up with a variety of communication efforts including:

- o A **Straight From the Heart** newsletter featuring messages from Mrs. Reagan and articles about the activities of young people across the country who are actively involved in drug abuse prevention efforts (youth can also be invited to submit articles and ideas for the newsletter);
- o Visits by Mrs. Reagan to local youth programs initiated through the project;
- o Visits by young people to Washington, D.C.;
- o Prearranged telephone calls in which Mrs. Reagan can respond directly to young people's questions and concerns;

- o Regional or national meetings of young people involved in the project;
- o Development of print and broadcast profiles of young people and local prevention programs initiated through the project.

Launching Straight From the Heart: A Three-phase Process

Since there is no precedent for a project of this kind, it would be a mistake to begin by initiating the project on a nationwide basis. Instead, Pacific Institute recommends a three-phase process.

In the first phase the project will be announced and pilot tested in two of the eight communities in which the Gannett Company owns television stations. (The eight communities are: Atlanta, Denver, Fort Wayne, Little Rock, Louisville, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, and San Francisco.) In order to track the kinds of calls the project receives, predict the nature of future calls, and further develop appropriate responses, the staff will keep detailed records on such factors as:

- o Age of caller;
- o Number of calls;
- o Types and nature of requests;
- o Names of individuals and groups making requests;
- o Time of day calls are received;
- o Followup provided by project staff.

After a suitable period of time this information will be assembled and analyzed, and a report will be submitted to Mrs. Reagan's staff. (In some cases callers may wish to remain anonymous; this request will be honored.)

The data gathered from the first phase will be helpful in planning the second phase--implementing the project in the other six communities in which Gannett operates television stations. These communities will be phased in during the project's first year.

Following further pilot testing and refinement of strategies and procedures, the project will be announced nationwide. At that time project media announcements, posters, and brochures will be made available to communities across the country, and project staff will develop a broadbased outreach effort. It may also be appropriate for Mrs. Reagan to initiate a major national media campaign to announce **Straight From the Heart**.

Responding to the Initial Calls

A critically important factor in project implementation will be the ability of the staff to respond sensitively to the initial phone calls, to analyze callers' needs, and to provide the best form of followup. Calls may take a variety of forms:

- o A caller might want information about the effects of a certain type of drug on individual physical and mental functions. In this case the staff might begin by discussing this and related issues over the phone and follow up by mailing carefully screened informational materials (either developed inhouse or purchased from existing drug information sources) appropriate for an audience of young adults.
- o A caller might have heard about the project and want assistance in initiating a prevention program in his or her community. In response the staff might begin by sending the caller informational materials written in plain, nontechnical language designed to help young people locate and involve the kinds of adult and organizational resources they will need to initiate programs. The staff might follow up this call by sending a team comprised of an adult consultant and a youth consultant to help the local community with program planning and development.
- o A caller might want to offer his or her services as a volunteer in a local drug abuse prevention program. The project might refer the caller to a variety of programs in his or her community or, if no programs are available, discuss ways in which the caller could initiate a program.

Development of Materials

Immediately after project start-up, the staff, in conjunction with the White House, will begin to develop written materials that will be an important tool for communicating with the target audience of youth. These will include:

- o Brochures describing the project. These will be designed for youth in a variety of settings, both urban and rural, and will also be available in Spanish.
- o A pamphlet informing youth about steps they can take to prevent drug abuse. This pamphlet will describe the project's basic approach to drug abuse prevention and offer a variety of suggestions for youth action.

- o Posters announcing the project's name, purpose, toll-free phone number, and mailing address. Several different posters will be developed for a variety of communities and settings in order to reach the widest possible audience.
- o A booklet outlining a basic program organizing process. Colorfully illustrated and written in clear, straightforward terms that will make it appealing to youth, this booklet will briefly answer such questions as: Can I really do something about the drug problem? What kinds of things can I do? Who should I ask to help me? What are the obstacles likely to be and how can I deal with them? What will I need?

The project will develop additional materials as needs are identified for specific kinds of information not available elsewhere.

IV. MANAGEMENT PLAN

Since this paper offers only a general idea of the project, Pacific Institute is prepared to develop a detailed technical statement of how **Straight From the Heart** will attain its proposed goals. For current review the following aspects of project management should be noted:

- o Length of effort. This paper describes the first project year. It is likely that the project will continue for many years to come and that staff needs and organizational procedures will change over time. Pacific Institute will develop revised worksopes and plans on an annual basis.
- o Geography of operations. Initially the project would be based in Pacific Institute's two corporate headquarters offices, located in Lafayette, California (outside San Francisco), and Bethesda, Maryland (outside Washington, D.C.).
- o Fiscal management. Pacific Institute is a private, nonprofit organization that has qualified for tax-exempt and charitable status under both Federal and California requirements. The Institute's fiscal office will administer funds for **Straight From the Heart** as a separate and distinct Pacific Institute project. Funds will be solicited entirely from private sector and individual contributors.
- o Project advisory board. In conjunction with the White House, Pacific Institute will develop a Board of Advisers for the project. The board will consist of high-level decision makers, business people, youth representatives, and leaders in the fields of sports and entertainment who are known for their pro-youth, antidrug positions.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation is a private, nonprofit corporation headquartered in Lafayette, California and Bethesda, Maryland. Founded in 1974, the Institute specializes in research, program planning, and delivery of technical assistance to youth-oriented programs and organizations across the country concerned with drug and alcohol abuse, juvenile delinquency, positive youth development, and related issues. Institute projects have been funded by a variety of sources including the Federal Government, State governments, foundations, and the private sector.

Currently the Institute has a staff of 35 professionals with backgrounds in psychology, business administration, communications, sociology, public health, and criminal justice. The staff has a broad background in service delivery that will contribute to the effectiveness of **Straight From the Heart**. Projects that Pacific Institute has managed include:

- o The PYRAMID Project. (Sponsor: National Institute on Drug Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) In operation since 1975, the PYRAMID Project delivers information and onsite technical assistance to individuals, parent groups, and drug abuse prevention programs throughout the country. The project operates a toll-free number, and project staff are highly skilled in responding to telephone requests from a variety of callers. In addition, the project maintains a national pool of expert consultants who deliver onsite services to local programs and communities. In conjunction with PYRAMID, the Institute has developed what is probably the most complete collection of information and materials relating to drug abuse prevention in the country. Also as part of the PYRAMID Project, the Institute has managed and helped to disseminate the Channel One program, which has assisted young people and adults in more than 150 communities across the country in developing positive alternatives to drug abuse through youth involvement in community improvement projects. Pacific Institute staff have successfully worked with youth consultants in a manner similar to that proposed for **Straight From the Heart**.