

## AWARENESS OF RISING DRUG USE HALF THE BATTLE

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According to the survey of teen drug use released April 12 by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and reported in : the article "Group: Parents refuse to see kids' drug use," many of today's "been there, done that" Baby Boomer parents ignore or minimize warning signs that their children are experimenting with drugs, especially marijuana. Since they themselves went through that "phase" without harm, so, too, will their teenage progeny, they believe.

These findings concern me greatly, as a parent and as an addictions professional. Many people don't realize that today's marijuana is not the "pot" of the 1960s and '70s. It is far stronger than that of our generation, often 300 percent to 400 percent stronger. It may be - and often is - laced with lethal substances and other drugs such as cocaine, heroin or PCP, unbeknownst to a young buyer.

Today's marijuana is everywhere. It is seductive. It is very easy for kids to obtain. It serves as a "gateway" or introduction to other drugs and, as such, a health threat of crisis proportions to our children and families.

The kids and drugs problem is far greater than any survey will ever document. If 60 percent of a group of kids say they have experimented, you can bet that another 20 percent to 30 percent have but won't admit it.

Continuing an aggressive public awareness campaign through the media is critical. I hope The Post will keep up its good work.

Mickey Bowman, executive director/CEO

Growing Together

Lake Worth

- Memo: Letters to the Editor

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