
Copyright 1986 Bergen Record Corp.
The Record

July 27, 1986; SUNDAY; ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: OPINION; Pg. 003

LENGTH: 1286 words

HEADLINE: KIDS: CONTROVERSIAL WAY OF TREATING DRUG
ABUSE

COLUMN: LETTERS

BYLINE: The Record

3/10/2004 9:08 PM

BODY:

Editor, The Record: I was astounded when I read your front-page article regarding KIDS of Bergen County in The Sunday Record July 13.

My son was a client at the KIDS program from October 1984 to February 1986, and I am familiar with the people quoted in your article.

Never at any time did I witness the abuse described in the article. I did think to myself from time to time, however, that any other program would have had some of these kids in a straitjacket. I had adolescents in my home who, I can assure you, while not being coddled, were far from tormented.

The parents quoted in the article seem to have forgotten why they came to KIDS in the first place, a complete inability to control their offspring as well as total desperation at not being able to find help.

The staff at the KIDS program are dedicated professionals whose concern for their charges goes beyond the call of duty. They can be reached 24 hours a day and respond immediately in a crisis. Although my son did not complete treatment, as far as I am concerned this program saved his life and my sanity at a time when I had nowhere else to turn.

I think it is a shame that Dr. **Miller Newton** and the KIDS program are being subjected to this witch hunt, and I support them wholeheartedly in their attempt to stop the craziness of drug and alcohol abuse.

I believe that closing the KIDS program will do more damage to drug treatment of adolescents in New Jersey than any other act. Lives are being lost every day, and the attempts to close the program by disgruntled former clients are akin to helping children commit suicide.

JEAN ARONSON
Paterson

Editor, The Record:

As a faithful reader of The Record for many years, I was aghast at such one-sided journalism in your article about KIDS of Bergen County.

The article's headline, "Is it treatment or torment?," gives the distinct impression th at KIDS of Bergen County is an uncaring organization that mistreats youngsters. Also, the article centered on interviews with three former clients and their accusations, giving a biased view of the program.

What you omitted was a description of the antisocial behavior of these three youngsters prior to their coming to the program as well as their disruptive behavior while in the program. Also, what about the current sobriety of these three youngsters? Did your reporter investigate that? Conning and lying are part and parcel of their insidious disease, chemical dependency. Has the county prosecutor considered that facet of the case?

As the mother of a graduate of the KIDS program, I know the druggie routine well. I also know the depression and stress that living with a druggie child brings to the family. Blaming others becomes a very convenient way to handle this depression and stress. I know, because I resorted to similar accusatory behavior myself.

I really fear that some youngster who needs help may miss out on an excellent drug-alcohol-treatment center because of the way your article has tainted the KIDS program. How about a Record reporter covering the other side of the story? That would include talking with program graduates whose sobriety is credible, and with their families who have reestablished a sane family life and found love for one another again.

VIVIAN P. BELEN
Fair Lawn

Editor, The Record: It was good to see that The Record's investigative reporting has begun to look into KIDS of Bergen County, the substance-abuse program in River Edge. I have heard other upsetting reports of the misguided kind of coercion that KIDS uses, similar to the reports in your article.

3/10/2004 9:08 PM

One girl from a Bergen County town was part of a nice, caring group of friends, who were all good kids. She came home one night after experimenting with beer for the first time, and her single parent, who wasn't quite comfortable with having a teen-age daughter anyway, contacted KIDS of Bergen County. She was immediately taken away and kept totally out of touch with any of her friends.

I saw the anguish on the part of her bewildered friends, one of whom is in a church group with me. They didn't know what she had done or how long she would be gone, they hadn't had a chance to say goodbye, and no one knew if there would be any contact in the future.

As a parent, I ask: Since when do parents in our society have the right to take this action without even listening to a minor? KIDS says they pattern their sessions after the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, but they've got it wrong. "Admitting we are powerless over a substance" doesn't come from someone pinning a teen-ager to the floor.

So a big thank you for shedding light on this scary organization.

We protest when people "disappear" in Central America or South Africa, but now we're finding out that it can happen here in Bergen County.

LINDA G. SMITH
Glen Rock

Editor, The Record: We have been involved in the KIDS program for more than 11 months and are outraged by your story. The headline was pure sensationalism.

The problem is you don't know anything about the disease. Your story relied on the statements of parents and clients who quit halfway through the treatment.

We were a fairly normal family until my child used drugs. The guilt built up in her and the lying became routine. Soon our lives were hell.

We went for medical examinations; we tried family counseling and individual psychiatric help. Our child wound up in an expensive hospital

for 19 months and returned to her compulsion less than 24 hours after coming home. It now turns out that she was getting drugs in the hospital.

Our daughter spent 10 1/2 months in the KIDS program before returning home. She has made terrific changes and her treatment is far from finished. We expect that she will be able to have a healthy, happy, and productive life.

You hear stories every week of how drugs lead to violence and death, yet you are shocked when a druggie kid has to be restrained. We don't understand that. Did you really think druggie kids are going to sit still and realize how chemically dependent they are in two days or two weeks?

While in the hospital (one of the best in the country) our child jumped out of the window to do drugs. There was staff on duty and special locks on the windows.< She crushed a vertebra and has had pain ever since. To us, that is a good reason not to have windows at a drug-treatment facility.

We have found there is a good reason for all of the rules at KIDS.

There is no abuse and there is no mistreatment. The only torment is when the child suddenly realizes how drugs have screwed up his life!

From being around the building on weekends and from having "newcomers" in our home, we can say that KIDS is a program of 24-hours-a-day caring.

A year ago our lives were a mess. There was no hope, no joy, only anger and turmoil. All of our problems have not disappeared, but we have some joy and a lot of hope.

The kids who do drugs cannot help themselves. The parents must intervene and make a commitment to get them help. We feel good that we have made this commitment. That we have, through KIDS, given our child a second chance at life itself.

THOMAS HANRAHAN
PATRICIA HANRAHAN
Glen Rock

Staff Writer Laura Gardner replies: The article was based on the Bergen County prosecutor's inquiry into former clients' allegations of physical abuse, unlawful restraint, and violation of clients' rights while in the KIDS program.

More than a dozen former clients and family members were interviewed for the article.

LOAD-DATE: April 3, 1996
