

## SETTING `DRUGGIES STRAIGHT

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Editor, The Record:

I was surprised and disappointed with your editorial of Feb. 12, "Unlicensed and unregulated. " The tone and content were distinctly different from and more prejudicial than your earlier editorial "Beyond the KIDS case" (July 30, 1986). The original editorial stated that it was difficult to get at the truth about allegations against the KIDS program because of the questionable believability of youngsters who have lied and stolen from parents and friends to satisfy a drug habit. You finally determined "the answers will have to come from the prosecutor's office. "

Bergen County Prosecutor Larry McClure answered. He "found no evidence of abuse or criminal wrongdoing by KIDS. " He said, "Some clients might have claims against other youths due to physical contact. " Normal kids in junior and senior high school fight occasionally. KIDS has a patient population with less self-control that is more prone to violence. Teen-agers who fight and abuse others sometimes have to be restrained to prevent harm to themselves and others.

As a clinician, I have dealt with 3,600 kids the last eight years without serious injury, a better record than most psychiatric hospitals and schools for problem teen-agers. Your editorial unfairly overstated Mr. McClure's conclusions about our program.

KIDS of Bergen County Inc., a treatment program for troubled youth, takes "walking disaster area" kids in trouble with family, school, law, and drugs and turns them into "winners. " Parents, sibling, and staff work hard with enormous care to help these troubled teen-agers.

To say we are "unlicensed and unregulated" is misleading and untrue. True, we are unlicensed. A crack in state law does not license outpatient programs. We are anxious to be licensed.

"Unregulated" is untrue and totally misleading. Under current New Jersey law, the Division of Youth and Family Services Institutional Abuse Unit has authority to investigate and resolve any incident of physical or psychological mistreatment of patients in any institution, licensed or unlicensed. KIDS is regulated as is Bergen Pines, Fair Oaks, Carrier Clinic, and other major institutions in New Jersey.

It is harmful and and unjust to me and to families who choose our program to play so carelessly with facts. As a professional, author of several books, and trainer for medical and other professional groups, I have had a long, respected career dealing with a difficult problem in our society. I hope The Record will take a more balanced and fair approach to KIDS and to me in the future.

MILLER NEWTON

President and Clinical Director

KIDS of Bergen County Inc.

River Edge

Editor, The Record:

I am a parent of a boy at the KIDS of Bergen County program. I have been very upset by the bad press that the program has received in the last six months. I am sure that if your son were a "druggie" you would understand my position. His life and sobriety are uppermost among my priorities.

I am not in the least threatened by the allegations of abuse because I know that they come from "druggie" kids who do not wish to return to the discipline and parents who cannot follow the commitment to the program. I am afraid for them and their future. I know that if my son, Kenny, completes this program, he has a chance to a future.

Other programs send kids out in six or eight weeks and they are back on the street in short order. I've seen it happen over and over again. That is why we chose this program for our son. You should talk to families and kids from the program. There is so much love in the "host homes. " As one with a host home, I invite you to come and see for yourself.

VICTORIA ██████████

Midland Park

Editor, The Record:

We are the parents of a child enrolled in the KIDS of Bergen County program. She has been there since October 1985, or 16 months.

We feel that you have personally insulted our integrity, judgment, and common sense, our friends at KIDS, and the staff. Many of your statements were false and many were misleading. This is not only unfair to KIDS, but also to us as parents, as well as your readers.

We have been present at open meetings twice a week since our child was enrolled, and during this time we have never experienced anything but love, care, and compassion at KIDS. We also have never once witnessed a representative from The Record present to experience the KIDS program firsthand. We are, therefore, offering you a public invitation to visit KIDS in order to accomplish some true investigative reporting.

SAMUEL VAN DYK

MARJORIE VAN DYK

Prospect Park

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