

DRUG PROGRAM GETS TEENS ON TRACK

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- Author/Byline: Julia Keller, Dispatch Accent Reporter
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That frequent teen-age lament - "You just don't understand!" - cuts no ice with Linda Pope, executive director of a new drug and alcohol treatment facility for adolescents in the Columbus area.

She understands, and then some. Pope, former director of Capital University's adult education program, readily acknowledges that she is a recovered alcoholic. That struggle, coupled with graduate degrees in sociology and administration, will help her coordinate the long-term program called Kidscope, she believes.

THE NON-PROFIT program, location of which is confidential, will open June 16. Telephone is 231-KIDS.

"I am one of these kids. Just an older version," said Pope, a native of Chicago, who lived in Denver before moving to Columbus. She and her husband, Larry Macoskie, who works at Buckeye Boys Ranch, are the parents of a 10-year-old daughter.

"As a result of my experiences, when I talk to these kids, they listen."

Kidscope's format is derived from a program in Cincinnati called Kids Helping Kids. Its success rate - measured by the number of its clients who are still drug-free a year after leaving the program - seems to be much higher than that of other programs. The key?

"It's a long-term, developmental, five-step process," Pope said.

"THE TYPICAL 'druggie' kid is a good child, a good student, up to when the drug or alcohol use begins. Then, bam! It's Jekyll-Hyde. Parents lose total control. They say, 'I'm afraid of my own child.'"

At that point, Pope said, parents come to Kidscope. The child is taken from the home and put in a guest home, provided by parents of other children in the program. "All responsibility - all - is taken from the child," Pope said. "For 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the child is literally attached to someone else." A youngster who is further along in the program holds onto the newcomer's belt loop, she said, accompanying the latter to meetings, meals, showers - everywhere.

The surveillance is supplemented by individual and group counseling, sessions with the child's own parents, and large family meetings that frequently become emotional.

"THE KIDS have gone so far in drug and alcohol use that they have lost all rights. They must earn back their responsibilities." As they move through the various phases of Kidscope, their freedom gradually is returned.

"It may sound cruel," Pope said. "But addiction is a disease. When kids are out on the streets, we can't treat them. We have to control them in order to treat them."

The average stay is one year, she said. The cost is \$5,000, but the child can be readmitted whenever necessary, at no charge. Five to 10 youngsters initially will be enrolled in the program. Projected capacity is 150 for the 18-member staff.

Pope said the fact that Kidscope was organized and funded is proof of the area's commitment to fighting substance abuse.

"Our problem won't be a lack of kids. Our problem will be saying to some parents, 'You're going to have to wait until we have room for your child.'"

- Caption: PHOTOLinda Pope Dispatch photo

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