

## PROGRAM REFLECTS PROGRESS AGAINST DRUGS

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WASHINGTON -- Almost a decade ago, Dr. Donald Ian Macdonald was a Florida pediatrician with a son who had a drug problem. And the doctor didn't know much about drug problems.

George Ross was a young counselor at a controversial treatment center for addicts. He helped Macdonald and his son, then 15, through a family-oriented rehabilitation program that lasted almost a year.

Yesterday, Macdonald and Ross had a reunion breakfast at the White House.

Macdonald now works there as special assistant to President Reagan for drug abuse policy. Ross, founder and executive director of a Lexington treatment program called Possibilities Unlimited, is in Washington for the White House Conference for a Drug Free America.

The weeklong conference was required by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986. Experts at the conference are working on a report, including proposed solutions, for the president and Congress.

In all, about 2,000 people are participating in panel discussions at a Washington hotel.

Macdonald, who concedes he knew "almost nothing" about drug addiction before meeting Ross, gave Ross a little something extra, an invitation to the White House.

Macdonald and Ross discussed the progress Ross has made with Possibilities Unlimited, a long-term treatment center for people ages 12 to 25 who have alcohol and drug problems.

They talked about the importance of developing community support for such programs so they can be successful without spending tax dollars.

Ross talked about the effect of the White House conference. "As an American public, we are just beginning to look at the issue of drugs. . . What Nancy Reagan has done is make it fashionable to talk about the issue."

In an interview, Ross complimented Macdonald for the role he has taken. "He has done a magnificent job in carrying the parents' side of the (anti-drug) message to important political figures."

Macdonald understands drug problems so well because he had to be so understanding with his teen-age son. It has been through personal experience and study that he has become an expert on something he knew little about in 1979.

That is when Andy Macdonald admitted his "drug of choice" was marijuana, and, urged by his parents, he sought help.

Ross, then in Florida, was assistant director of a program called "Straight."

It was a time when people knew much less about drug addiction and politicians gave the issue little, if any, attention.

"Back then I didn't even know where I could find information on drugs," said Bobbie Macdonald, wife of the White House aide. "Now I marvel at the dedicated people who are involved."

The Macdonalds shared their experiences with friends and others who needed help.

"It was an embarrassment for Mac to be a pediatrician with a child on drugs," Bobbie Macdonald said. "At the same time, we made a decision to be open and tell everyone. I think we need to know that nice people have children who get in trouble. We reached out to a lot of people."

A lot, indeed. In 11 months, Mrs. Macdonald said, she and her husband contributed to "Straight" by opening their home to 54 people in the program.

Now Andy Macdonald is a success story. He is an assistant director of alumni affairs at Emory University in Atlanta.

"Andy owes his life to 'Straight,' and he knows it," his mother said.

"George was a very good counselor. He really pushed me. He was fairly obnoxious. But that was his job, be obnoxious to get me to see the necessities."

- **Caption: GEORGE ROSS**

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