

**Weather**

Variable cloudiness with a 30 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Details Pg. 2-A.

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**Today's Chuckle**

Sign outside a weight-reducing salon: "Come in and shoo the fat."

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P. 1A

## First Lady Visits St. Petersburg In Her Fight Against Drug Abuse

By D'VERA COHN

ST. PETERSBURG (UPI) — Nancy Reagan, on a two-state tour of drug programs, told elementary school classes Monday to "do what you know is right" and not just follow their friends, then held an emotional meeting with self-described teenage "druggies."

In the afternoon, Mrs. Reagan talked with third-, fourth- and fifth-graders at the Pinellas Park Elementary School in a preventive program called ALPHA. They greeted her with songs and gave her a bouquet of flowers.

In the evening, she sat in for several hours on an encounter group session at **Straight Inc.**, a controversial program for teenage drug users patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous.

The group first sang patriotic songs. Then teenager after teenager stood up in the large cinderblock auditorium — decorated with large inspirational signs and an American flag — to tell stories of drug abuse with substances ranging from cocaine to insecticide. The teenagers, mainly white and clean-cut, described themselves as "druggies."

Mrs. Reagan, wearing a black Chanel-style suit and a red blouse, asked the teens what drugs they started on, whether they

thought drugs were glamorized in the movies and whether they wanted marijuana legalized — to which the answer was a resounding no.

"How many of you were high at the dinner table and your parents didn't know?" asked the first lady.

Almost every hand of the several hundred in the room shot up. When she asked what she could do, Mrs. Reagan was told, "Help the country correctly perceive the problem." She replied, "Well, that's what I'm trying to do."

Teenagers in **Straight**, a privately funded program, live with foster families and spend 12 hours a day in intensive encounter groups at the center. As they make progress, they get more time off.

The program is controversial, and the American Civil Liberties Union sued Straight's Atlanta branch, saying five teenagers were being held against their will. The ACLU is holding off on pressing the suit in hopes of working out an out of court agreement to name an independent monitoring committee.

A 1978 Florida attorney general's office investigation found no evidence of criminal activity at Straight.

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# First Lady

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Mrs. Reagan, wearing a red-and-gray plain dress and an oatmeal-colored jacket with red trim, sat in the middle of a circle of children, parents and staff at Pinellas Park Elementary School.

It is important to be "aware of yourself as a person and what you can do regardless of peer pressure and what everybody else is doing," she told the youngsters, some leaning forward, elbows on knees, to hear her.

"If you can learn it now, you're way ahead of the game. Go ahead and do what you know is right and what's good for you," she said.

Mrs. Reagan told the parents that their job of rearing children "is probably the most important thing we're given to do in our whole lives - and the only one we're given no training for."

"We want to do what's best and sometimes we don't always know what's best," she said. "If you can catch your child at a point where he or she may be having a little trouble, it's a great thing and brings you closer together. I'm a great believer in the family."

"I think it's great what you're doing," the first lady said.

"Thank you for making us feel so beautiful," said Jamie, a curly-haired boy in a green suit, who handed the first lady a bouquet of flowers from the class. She pulled him to her, hugged him and kissed him on the cheek.

The ALPHA program is a 15-week class for youngsters who show early signs of future personal, social or academic problems.

As she arrived at the cinderblock elementary school, Mrs. Reagan was applauded by a group of children singing "Hello Nancy" to the tune of "Hello Dolly."

Inside the classroom, brightly colored posterboard signs welcomed her and the students applauded when she entered.