

Drug Program To Open Facility In Washington

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WASHINGTON — Nancy Reagan brought national attention to the St. Petersburg-based Straight Inc. drug rehabilitation program when she visited Florida in February.

Following the first lady's visit to the acclaimed, and sometimes controversial, treatment center on Gandy Boulevard, Straight Inc. was featured on NBC Magazine.

And now the program is about to locate a permanent branch in the Washington, D.C., area to serve more than 100 youths from Virginia and Maryland who now are enrolled in the Pinellas County program.

Wayne Kayser, Straight's director of development, said the response to Straight's plans to place a facility in northern Virginia "have been very positive."

Kayser said Dr. Mel Riddle has been hired as the program director for the Washington area facility and is taking part in a training program in St. Petersburg.

Kayser said he is sure the first lady's visit to Straight Inc. boosted interest in the program, but he said a large number of Washington area youths were enrolled in the program

at the time.

One of the strongest supporters of Straight in the Washington area is Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., who is helping parents in a fund drive to raise \$450,000 to get the program started.

More than \$200,000 has been raised, and Kayser said there is no doubt Straight will open a center in the Washington area.

No building has been obtained, but Kayser said he hopes about 300 youths will be able to be served by the Washington facility. He said about 325 are served by the St. Petersburg center.

Straight also has branches in Atlanta, Cincinnati and Sarasota. And Kayser said the next branch, after the Washington one, probably will be in the Orlando area.

Teen-agers at Straight, which is privately financed, participate in encounter sessions of 12 hours a day, six days a week, where the idea is to have them relearn values and change behavior.

When the president's wife visited Straight in St. Petersburg, she attended an "open meeting" at which teen-agers stood before their parents and made confessions about the drugs they had been taking and told of their plans to "get straight."