

Pinellas plays host to vice president

[CITY Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

Author: JOHN HARWOOD

Date: Mar 18, 1987

Start Page: 1.B

Section: METRO AND STATE

Text Word Count: 475

Document Text

PINELLAS PARK - Jennifer's parents berated her, scorning her drug use and lying. Her behavior, her father said angrily, had "caused me to lose all respect for you."

"But I want you to know you're here because we love you," the father added.

He was crying. So was Jennifer's mother. So was Jennifer.

The emotional exchange took place at the Straight Inc. drug treatment center Tuesday morning in front of television cameras, other teen-agers and parents, and the vice president of the United States. And George Bush, in town on a campaign swing, said he was moved.

"I don't see how there's a dry eye in the house," Bush told the crowd of a few hundred after hearing several similar stories. "This is probably as inspiring a 20 or 30 minutes as Barbara and I have had in our lives."

His appearance at Straight was the public side of Bush's four-hour visit to Pinellas County. Later, he appeared at a \$1,000-a-person fund-raising luncheon at the Belleview Biltmore hotel in Belleair. That was strictly private, an aide explained, because contributors to Bush's presidential campaign, which hasn't been formally announced, prefer "a little more intimate atmosphere."

Bush flew to St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport from Orlando, where he held other fund-raisers Monday. When he arrived at Straight about 10:30 a.m., he and his wife first met privately with two young patients at the program and their parents.

Mark ██████, 19, of St. Petersburg said Bush asked about his past involvement with drugs and how the Straight program worked. Shannon ██████, 14, of Largo said the vice president ended the 15-minute meeting with words of encouragement.

"He just congratulated me on how far I've come," Shannon told reporters later.

A Straight official said the two were chosen to meet with Bush because they were making good progress and felt comfortable talking to reporters. Others who spoke out during the group session used only first names.

Bush praised the sometimes-controversial drug-treatment center as a "wonderful" program "based on family and faith." Echoing the appeal of Nancy Reagan, Bush said the drug problem could be solved "by young people determined to just say no."

An aide said the Bush campaign expected to raise more than \$125,000 from the luncheon in Belleair, which was organized by local real estate developers Thomas Mahaffey Jr. and Joseph Zappala. After the event, Bush headed for another fund-raiser in Palm Beach before returning to Washington on Tuesday night.

[Illustration]

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, Tony ██████ (2); COLOR PHOTO, Ricardo ██████; Caption: U.S. Rep. Michael Bilirakis, R-Fla., greets Vice President George Bush; Barbara Bush makes sure her husband, George, is ready for his Pinellas County appearance; Vice President; Caption: George Bush and his wife, Barbara, listen to stories of troubled teen-agers and their parents Tuesday at Straight Inc. They later visited in Tampa. Color photo ran on 1A.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

PINELLAS PARK - Jennifer's parents berated her, scorning her drug use and lying. Her behavior, her father said angrily, had ``caused me to lose all respect for you.``

The emotional exchange took place at the Straight Inc. drug treatment center Tuesday morning in front of television cameras, other teen-agers and parents, and the vice president of the United States. And George Bush, in town on a campaign swing, said he was moved.

His appearance at Straight was the public side of Bush's four-hour visit to Pinellas County. Later, he appeared at a \$1,000-a-person fund-raising luncheon at the Belleview Biltmore hotel in Belleair. That was strictly private, an aide explained, because contributors to Bush's presidential campaign, which hasn't been formally announced, prefer ``a little more intimate atmosphere.``

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.