Drug Awareness Program Planned

by Dawn Currie

The teens involved in the Adolescent Health Project are joining forces with Drug Dependency Services to observe Drug Awareness Week from November 15 to 22. A full agenda of activities has been planned during the week for teens and their families, as well as members of the general public.

The theme of the week is "Together We Make the Difference."

A spokesperson for the Adolescent Health Project explained that the results of the survey of over 400 teens in Antigonish town and county conducted last spring identified drugs, particularly alcohol, as the number one concern among teens in the community.

"We can't lose sight of just how major a concern alcohol is, and we hope to heighten awareness of the problem in the community. We think that Drug Awareness Week is a good time to show that activities can be fun without drugs and/or alcohol, and at the same time involve the community in these activities," she said.

This Saturday, November 14, a family dance in planned in conjunction with the Parents Association at MacPherson Elementary School. This is an occasion for all, "a real old-fashioned ceilidh for all the family," Nelda Armour of Drug Dependency Services says. The event is open to all and takes place from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

"Our activities during Drug Awareness Week are focused on the youth of our community as well as the family members, and we hope that everyone will join us on Saturday evening in this family-centered fun evening," she adds.

On Sunday, November 15, the group will sponsor a Teen Carnival at the Royal Canadian Legion hall from 1 to 4 p.m. During the afternoon, several groups will provide displays including the RCMP, TADD, nurses, etc. The focus of the carnival will be the promotion of healthy lifestyles and will feature a food fair, fitness club, aerobics, jazzercises, games, prizes and even a magic show. Everyone is welcome to attend.

On Monday, November 16, a panel discussion focusing on "'Alcoholism, The Family Illness — From Abuse to Recovery" will take place at CACL beginning at 7:30 p.m. This panel will include representatives from various self-help groups sharing experiences and offering a positive note of strength and hope to all those interested in the topic.

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In conjunction with Drug Awareness Week activities, a drug awareness display will be set up at the Antigonish Mall on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, November 18, 19 and 20. Coordinating the display are Keri Bobbitt and George Chayko, members of the drug awareness committee of the Antigonish Lions Club. In addition to representatives of the Lions Club, volunteers from the RCMP, Teens and TADD will be present to answer ques-

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TOGETHER WE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE is the theme for National Drug Awareness Week, November 15 to 22. Helping to make a difference are representatives from the Adolescent Health Project Susan Jewkes (front, left) and Barbara Hayes (standing, left) along with community health worker Joyce Wallace-Hills (front, right) clinical therapist Nelda Armour (back, center) and community health worker for Guysborough County Gerard MacPherson, all of Nova Scotia Drug Dependency Services.

On Tuesday, November 17, a film and panel discussion will explore the issues of alcohol, drugs and teenagers. The panel will consist of local professionals, teenagers and representatives of self-help groups and will take place in the cafeteria at the Philatelic Center beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Individual presentations will take place in the community on Wednesday, November 18.

On Thursday, November 19, a teenage coffee house will take place at St. James United Church hall from 7 to 9 p.m. This event will feature music provided by local teen bands and everyone will enjoy coffee and snacks.

The week-long activities will conclude on Saturday, November 21, with "Fashion Through the Decades," and a teen dance at the Legion. Teenagers will present fashions from the '40s to '90s during the fashion show, and everyone will have an opportunity to socialize and dance the evening away from 8 p.m. to midnight. There will be a alcohol-free bar, with the adults attending the bar and serving the clien-

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tions and to pass out information pamphlets. There will be draws on t-shirts featuring the theme for the week, "Together We Make the Difference."

Other events have been tentatively planned for the week and will be announced at a later date.

Clinical therapist Nelda Armour, community health workers Joyce Wallace-Hills and Gerard MacPherson and receptionist Delia MacChesney, all of the Drug Dependency Services in Antigonish and Guysborough, offer their full co-operation during this week.

"This is a good opportunity for us to educate members of the general public about our work and the services we offer," Armour explains. "We want to stress that alcohol is a drug and that alcoholism is a disease, just like any other disease, but we want to stress that like any other disease, there is relief for both the sufferer and his/her family members and loved ones. We also want everyone to know that our work is strictly confidential and that we welcome anyone interested in learning more about our services."

The local office of Drug Dependency Services is located in the Professional Building on St. Andrews Street, and has been in operation since it opened its doors in 1974, offering a positive approach to the treatment and prevention of drug dependency. "Although we have been here almost 20 years, people may not be aware of our service, and we want to let them know we are here and want to help," Armour says.

The Drug Dependency Program which serves Antigonish, Colchester, Cumberland, Guysborough and Pictou counties, focuses on prevention and treatment and includes:

Detoxication — persons needing to withdraw from alcohol or other drugs are placed under caring and watchful eyes of Registered Nurses and counsellor attendants. A doctor is available when needed. The emphasis at the Pictou Detoxication Unit is on rest and return to a balanced diet, while medications are kept to the necessary minimum. The criteria for admission to the unit are: patient must enter voluntarily; the patient must be intoxicated or in withdrawal from drugs; the patient must be ambulatory (not unconscious); the patient must be free of other medical emergencies.

There is a yearly average of 1,200 admissions, both male and female, from all walks of life, and people take advantage of the 17-bed facility which offers 24-hour care every day of the year. Following withdrawal from the toxic effects of alcohol and/or other drugs there are a number of treatment options open to people.

Treatment Orientation Program — this is an additional five-day program for selected patients. It offers opportunity for increased knowledge concerning the physical, emotional, social and spiritual effects of excessive drug use. In addition it effectively links the patient with follow-up services both within the commission and to other appropriate groups and/or agencies.

Local centers are located in Antigonish, Amherst, New Glasgow, Pictou and Truro. Staffed by social workers, community health workers and secretaries, these offices offer a ready referral service along with assessment and therapy on an out-patient basis. Therapy can include individual, family and/or group sessions, depending on the needs of the person. Guidance, encouragement and follow-up are offered in a caring manner by experienced staff members. This program emphasizes the opportunity to discover the potential to live a drug-free life.

Twenty-eight-day, in-patient program at Recovery House in Monastery — gives a person an opportunity to examine intensely their illness and to begin to develop new skills and a new lifestyle in order to cope more effectively with life. These goals are achieved through lectures, films, group therapy, individual counselling and exposure to self-help groups such as A.A. and Al-Anon. Other family members are encouraged to become involved in this process.

Industrial programs — established in the work community and have a two-fold function: identify the problem worker and return them to an acceptable level of productivity; respond to management and labor's requests for assistance in dealing with the problem of drug dependency in the workplace.

School and community programs — include drug awareness programs for parents and teachers, peer education programs, curriculum development and general information dissemination.

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Local committees — consist of groups of citizens throughout the region who share a common concern about drug dependency. These groups agree to voluntarily associate themselves with the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency, its regional board and program objectives. The main goal of local committees is, through education, to create a community awareness around drug dependency concerns and issues so that these may be addressed more creatively and objectively.