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A New PATH
Parents for Addiction Treatment and Healing

Vol XVIII January 2005

A Postcard from the President

by Caroline Stewart

Happy New Year Everyone,

Hope you are all recovering from the holidays. PATH celebrated the induction of its newest board members on December 7th. I am proud to share the PATH table with Sylvia Liwerant as our Vice President, Mary Jo Grubbs as the Treasurer and Donald Stewart as our newest board member/Secretary.

In case you don't already know, Donald is my better half and he takes exceptional minutes (he also is very handsome and is an excellent gourmet cook).

We are also delighted to announce that some really dynamic new people have joined our board. They are: Delsa Dixon and Ruth Klampert. Delsa is a very talented wedding planner. Her charisma and energy will be a real addition to our group. Ruth is a small business owner and promises to bring important business acumen to our work.

One of the highlights of the PATH holiday party was Gretchen Burns Bergman's beautiful CD ROM photo-music montage of the 2004 PATH year. Seeing all of the amazing things PATH has accomplished this past year was very moving. The photo tribute was accompanied by Sylvia Liwerant's inspiring classical piano pieces and the amazing song, *Givin' Somethin' Back* by the Donovan Rap artist, Pierre Alexander. I don't know about the rest of you, but rap is not my cup of tea. This song, however, blows me away.

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Executive Director's Message

by Gretchen Burns Bergman

Prop 36 Success: Is the cup half full or half empty?

During the Holidays my heart is full of gratitude for the progress that has been made in my own family and in the community in dealing with the disease of addiction, pride in what PATH and other organizations have done to reduce the stigma of substance abuse, and relief that so many people are getting the help they need and returning home safely and to be nurtured by their loved ones.

In 1999, when A New PATH originated, our first and most passionate efforts were to promote mandated treatment instead of incarceration for non-violent drug offenders. I have a son who was incarcerated and active in his heroin addiction in 2000 at the same time that I became State Chairperson for Proposition 36, the treatment-instead-of-incarceration-for-non-violent-drug-offenders initiative. I didn't think that my efforts would directly help my family, but I knew in my heart that this change of policy would help others and could save lives for generations to come. My son agreed to allow me to tell his story so that others might benefit. For that I am truly proud and grateful.

Proposition 36 was passed in November of 2000 and implemented in July 2001. Recently it has met with mixed responses in the media. The Los Angeles Daily News reported in November 2004 that "A UCLA study concluded that California's Proposition

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Path Welcomes Your Involvement

PATH holds quarterly educational speaker meetings. Our next General meeting will be held on March 8, 2005 at 7pm at Alvarado Parkway Institute, 7050 Parkway Drive in La Mesa (619-465-4411). We invite you to attend and to get more involved in our many projects to reduce the stigma of the disease of addiction and to increase substance abuse treatment options. Please don't miss this meeting as we will be discussing harm reduction. Prior to the meeting at 6pm we will be holding a support group for all who would like to talk to others who have shared the pain of the family disease of addiction. For information call: 619-670-1184.

Our Board of Directors meets monthly on the second Wednesday of each month at 6pm. Please let us know if you are interested in attending or if you would like to serve as a member of the Board of Directors in the future: 619-670-1184. The next meeting will be held on February 9, 2005.

Resource Information:
A New PATH: 619-670-1184
AA Hotline: 619-265-8762
Alanon, Alateen: 619-296-2666
Naranon: 858-492-8720
NA Hotline: 619-584-1007
Central Public Defender: 619-338-4700
Juvenile Hall: 858-694-4500
Las Colinas Jail (women): 619-258-3176
Mental Health Assoc.: 619-543-0412
Probation: 619-515-8202
SD County Jail (men): 619-615-2808
SD Superior Court Central: 619-531-4420
SD County Alcohol & Drug Service Info. & Referral: 619-692-5727
Teen Drug Screen, Palmerado E.D., 858-694-8497

Alternative News Sources

www.anewpath.cc
www.jointogether.org
www.narconews.com
www.drcnet.org
www.reconsider.org
www.drugpolicy.org
www.sdchip.org

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Gretchen Burns Bergman, Managing Editor
Jan Roach, Editor and Designer
A New PATH
2527 Doubletree Road
Spring Valley, CA 91978
Phone (619) 670-1184
E-mail gretchenb@abac.com
Check our website at www.anewpath.cc
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A New PATH 2004 Committees

Please help us move forward with our goals by joining one of our committees:

- Legislative & Prison Reform
- PR & Publicity
- Membership
- Education & Recovery
- Fundraising

Contact the office at 619-670-1184 or email anewpath@cox.net to join a committee.

Please Help Support Our Cause by Purchasing:

2005 Recovery Calendars $15
"Givin' Somethin' Back" CDs by inmate Pierre Alexander $10
Latin Concert CDs $20
PATH T-shirts $10
Resource Guides $10
Musical Gift to Recovery CDs $10
PATH License Plate Holders $5
2004 Recovery Calendars $5
Cassette of Ethan Nadelmann speech at February Harm Reduction Conference - $10

through our office: 619-670-1184 or email: anewpath@cox.net.If you would like us to mail any of these items to you,please add $4.

(See ordering information above)

From the Inside

with David Beck-Brown

Is Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger serious about prison reform?

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger says he will reorganize the Department of Corrections. When referring to the prison system and the powerful California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), he said there is "too much political influence, too much union control." Now, he says he will reorganize the Department of Corrections.

Can we trust the governor?

During the last elections the governor also said Prop. 66 should be defeated. Prop. 66 would have returned California's 3-strikes legislation to the intent of the people by applying 25 to life prison sentences only to serious and violent felonies, not for petty thieves and substance abusers, as is currently being done.

Nearly two-thirds of California inmates incarcerated with 3-strikes are in prison for committing non-violent and petty felonies. Some of these inmates have committed a violent crime in the past; however, they have been sentenced to prison, served their time, and paid their debt to society. This might have happened decades ago. Other 3-strikers have never been sent to prison for committing any violent crime.

Despite the facts, the governor, in conjunction with popular radio talk-shows, hammered the public with false information regarding Prop.66. In a matter of weeks, the initiative went from a projected voter support of over 69% to its defeat.

The Governor's TV ads, in combination with radio talk-shows, were a powerful blitz credited with defeating Prop. 66. Arnold's performance was flawless. His ads portrayed the former Hollywood Superstar and popular action-figure confidently walking amongst enlarged mug shots of violent criminals and child molesters warning the public that "26,000 dangerous criminals will be released from prison." Several of the felons portrayed in the mug shots are currently incarcerated in the maximum security prison in Pelican Bay.

The governor repeated his message in community rallies and bus tours. "Lying works", says Steve Hopcraft, campaign manager for the Yes on 66 effort. Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Raymond Cadei said the 26,000 figure was "patently false" and the number "mathematically impossible."

The State Attorney General's office put the number closer to 4,000. These inmates would be eligible only for a sentence review, not immediate release. During the sentence review process, they would have been vulnerable to new crimes filed against them, including allegations dismissed through the plea bargaining process. The chances of a dangerous felon being released into society would have been slight, at best.

In the meantime, California is imprisoning hundreds of people for life at a cost of one million dollars per inmate. The cost of incarceration rises as an inmate ages. The state also pays the inmates' health care, including kidney and heart transplants when needed.

Robert Woote, a Stockton man, has filed a lawsuit against the Governor for his participation in defeating Prop. 66. "What Arnold did is unfair, Woote said. "I think he misrepresented Prop. 66." The governor "...deceitfully and knowingly, through these fraudulent allegations, misinformed the voting public," states Woote in his lawsuit.

The former Department of Corrections' Northern California Regional Director, Ana Ramirez-Palmer says the state's heavily publicized prison

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Book Club for Female Inmates
at the Family Foundations Program

In October Sylvia Liwerant and A New PATH formed a Book Club behind bars at the Family Foundations Program in Kearny Mesa. Sylvia and a team of volunteers lead group discussions on different books. This program is for female non-violent substance abusers that have young children and/or are pregnant. The women that live there must complete a one-year program, during which they have self help groups, anger management, etc. to help in their rehabilitation.

The response has been very positive. A New PATH wants to facilitate and promote the joy of reading and would like the women to keep the books they read so they can start their own libraries once they leave the prison. When they go back into the community they will be given a gift certificate or a special discount in a bookstore to encourage them to continue reading.

According to Sylvia Liwerant, "Reading a book means living in the world of the characters portrayed in the book. It is a form of meditation, healing and tranquility. I am hoping reading will contribute to the rehabilitation and well-being of these women."

If you have any questions or would like to contribute funds or books, please contact Sylvia Liwerant at 858-459-0062 or the PATH office at 619-670-1184 or www.anewpath.cc

Executive Director's Message

Continued from page 1

36 has done less to curb re-arrest rates than drug courts or probationary programs."

However, in an article in the San Diego Union Tribune in December it was stated that thousands of Prop. 36 "graduates" are celebrating the holidays with their families in 2004 — for the first time in years. "Before I entered Prop. 36 I never saw my family during the holidays," said Gary, 47, a graduate who had used drugs for 30 years. "Yesterday I bought toys for my grandchildren. I am now a productive member of society."

A UCLA study by David Farabee, that analyzed 688 Prop 36 participants from the first six months to now, created a splash of bad publicity by stating that Prop 36 participants were more likely to be re-arrested than those who were referred to treatment by other criminal justice programs. He suggested that re-arrest rates could reflect the lack of residential treatment slots.

So what is the truth? According to the official state-sponsored evaluation conducted by Douglas Longshore of UCLA, Prop. 36 has extended access to treatment to tens of thousands of people who were not being reached by other treatment programs, 50 percent of whom have never had access to treatment before, and many of whom were "severely" drug-addicted.

Is the plan perfect? Probably not; but what a beginning! Every person who qualifies has the right to access treatment, so it offers that first giant step to recovery to almost 36,000 Californians a year. It saves money: an estimated savings of hundreds of millions of dollars in reduced prison incarceration costs. I have worried about the lack of residential treatment slots from the beginning, fearing that because residential is more costly than outpatient treatment, clients would be referred to less intense treatment modalities than their level of addiction indicated. So, of course Prop 36 can be improved, and it could certainly be enhanced with more funding.

Treatment providers know that relapse is often a part of the struggle toward sobriety. The challenge now is to redefine the meaning of "success", so that the criminal justice system and the general public can understand the complexity of the problem and continue to be engaged in therapeutic solutions.

In meeting with the state implementation teams, there is a sense of positive collaboration and commitment to making it work even more effectively. In the process everyone has learned more about the nature of the disease of addiction, and compassion has replaced anger. Breaking the cycle of drug addiction, ending the revolving door of the prison system, and supporting individuals struggling to recover and lead productive lives are the common goals.

There are countless Prop 36 success stories. I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of the individuals who had the opportunity to change their lives, including friends of my son, who, himself, is now several years into recovery. He is doing well, going to school, and has rebuilt loving relationships with our entire family.

So, is the cup half empty or half full? My cup is half full with the knowledge that recovery can happen. For many people reunited with their families and rebuilding their lives, their cups are overflowing.

Schwarzenegger's Reforms?

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reform efforts of the past year is "a sham." "They say they want input from everybody, but they don't want it from anybody who isn't saying 'yes'."

"It's a shame Gov. Schwarzenegger used his charisma and authority to defeat a much needed amendment of California's Draconian 3-strikes law. Despite his well published position of standing up to the politically powerful prison guards' union, he obviously threw them a bone by joining their efforts in defeating Prop. 66", said Gretchen Burns Bergman, Executive Director of A New PATH.

Bergman attended the governor's San Diego rallies, countering his statements to television news teams. "The CCPOA will probably bolster his political war chest for such a performance. They bought Gov. Gray Davis and now appear to be in bed with Arnold."

"Reforming the California prison system will take more than words." says Bergman. "We don't need lies from our governor, we need action."

Can we believe the governor when he says he wants prison reform?

Beck-Brown is Chair of the Prison Reform committee with A New PATH. He has worked at county, state, and federal lock-ups, including the Federal Witness Protection Program.

Support A New Path by Purchasing Ad Space

A New PATH appreciates your support! We continue to expand and our newsletter now goes out to over 2700 people! Consider purchasing an ad for our April edition

$50 – business card **$125 – ¼ page**
$250 – ½ page **$500 – full page**

Our printing deadline is March 28, 2005. Make checks payable to: A New PATH, 2527 Doubletree Rd., Spring Valley, CA 91978. Phone/fax: 619-670-1184. Email: anewpath@cox.net. Thanks for all of your support!

A New PATH Celebrates Efforts to Reduce the Stigma of Substance Abuse!

On December 14, 2004 A New PATH held the annual meeting and holiday party to share projects to reduce the stigma of substance abuse at Alvarado Parkway Institute. A power point presentation highlighted projects such as: the Book Club for Inmates, the Parent Survival Kit, *It Takes a Community*, the Faces of Recovery Calendar, Proposition 36 implementation success, and the Self-Reflection Garden.

An election was held and President Caroline Stewart announced the 2005 Board of Directors. Caroline spoke about her vision for PATH in the New Year. "For me, as the mother of a struggling addict, there is one truth: love the addict, respect the disease and remain humble", she said.

A New PATH presented County Supervisor Ron Roberts with a Demand Treatment! Award for his support of our projects to expand access to addiction treatment services. Supervisor Roberts had awarded PATH with a grant to help establish the Self-Reflection Garden at Donovan State Prison, as well as to create the Parent Survival Kits.

Jason Farren from Supervisor Roberts office was present to accept the trophy. "I applaud Supervisor Roberts for his foresight in understanding that in order to protect the public safety, we need to provide treatment services in the community, as well as behind bars, and transitional programs for individuals whose lives have been caught up in the criminal justice system due to their addictions to drugs and alcohol. These individuals will be returning to our neighborhoods", said Gretchen Burns Bergman, PATH Executive Director."

Business Card Ad

Families to Amend California's Three Strikes

For family members of 3-Strikers, the outcome of the November election was devastating. According to State Chair of FACTS effort to amend California's Three Strikes Sue Reams, "There are no words to convey my disappointment and sorrow for all of us whose hopes were shattered on November 2, 2004. There are no words to convey to you how difficult it was to have justice snatched from our hands five days before election day by money, power and lies. But we, like the Governor, will not be outdone.

At the end of the day **"We Will Be Back!"**

High Incidence of Drug Use Among San Diego Arrestees

The San Diego Association of Governments' Criminal Justice Research Division released its report on drug use among local arrestees as part of an on-going series of public bulletins. In 2003, 67 percent of male arrestees and 69 percent of female arrestees interviewed tested positive for at least one of the following drugs: marijuana, cocaine, opiates / heroin, PCP, or methamphetamine. Over two-thirds of local arrestees test positive for drugs.

Parent Survival Kits

Who do you turn to for help when a loved one has a substance abuse problem? Where do you go for information when your substance abusing family member gets arrested? As parents of offspring whose lives have been devastated by substance abuse and further damaged by their experience with incarceration, we know how confusing and painful this can be.

We have created a Parent Survival Kit, a brochure of information to help parents to navigate the criminal justice system. It includes information on when to intervene, warning signs of relapse, court related phone numbers, and the judicial process. Because the kit was funded by a grant from County Supervisor Ron Roberts, we are offering it free of charge to anyone who can benefit by the information. For info: 619-670-1184.

More Police Chiefs See Drug War Tactics Failing

Join Together Online 12/7/2004

A national Drug Strategies survey of 300 police chiefs finds that most feel that the war on drugs is failing, with many calling for more public-health involvement in fighting drug problems, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported Dec. 3. According to the survey that included responses from police chiefs in major metropolitan areas and small towns, 60 percent believed drug misuse is a more serious problem in their area than five years ago.

"Clearly, we are not winning (the drug war)," said Hubert Williams, a former Newark, N.J. police commander and president of the Washington, D.C. based Police Foundation, an advocacy group that co-commissioned the survey. "The most significant aspect of the survey, I feel, is that the police chiefs actually feel more strongly now than they did eight years ago when the first survey was conducted that our response to the drug problem is not working," said Mathea Falco, president of Drug Strategies, a research think tank that also sponsored the survey.

Nearly half of the police chiefs surveyed said the responsibility for reducing drug misuse and related crime should be shared among criminal-justice and public-health agencies through education, prevention, and treatment. Most also support court-supervised treatment programs instead of prosecution for nonviolent drug offenders. Three out of four respondents said they were lacking the necessary resources to fight the war on drugs.

PATH is endorsed by

- ⇒ San Diego Psychiatric Society
- ⇒ Mental Health Association in San Diego County
- ⇒ NAMI San Diego
- ⇒ Friends of SD Psychiatric Society
- ⇒ Families to Amend California's Three-Strikes
- ⇒ The San Diego District Attorney's Office
- ⇒ Join Together/Demand Treatment

President's Message

Continued from page 1

I thought you might like an update on the Donovan Self-reflection Garden. Gretchen, Lili and I spent the morning of December 20th meeting with Warden Robert J. Hernandez, thanks to the support of David Beck Brown. We presented him with a plaque commemorating the many generous people who helped make the garden possible. The plaque will reside in the administrative offices of the prison for all to see.

Gretchen, David, Lili and I then visited the garden to assess damage from recent rains and problems with inattention. Sadly, the HOPE program inmates have been on lock down and unable to maintain the garden. Warden Hernandez was open to our suggestion that a drip irrigation system be installed to provide consistent irrigation.

The good news is that the lock down is now ending and the HOPE community is eager to get back to work putting in new plants. Mary Jo Grubbs and I want to extend an invitation to other PATH gardeners to join us working with the inmates to replant the garden . The date is pending so let the PATH office know that you are interested.

2005 promises to be another busy year for PATH. Gretchen, Kristy and David Beck Brown continue to work tirelessly to find grant monies to keep us afloat. Kristy will help PATH in her spare time now that she and Richard are busy parenting their beautiful new baby.

Sylvia has big plans for the book club. We are especially interested in locating individuals that will purchase books for the inmates. Sylvia and I are exploring the idea of a PATH-sponsored jazz concert.

I have also been bugging Gretchen to put on one of her absolutely fabulous fashion show luncheons for us. Gretchen wants to use models in recovery. I think Andrew Elkins would be perfect (He's Mr. November in our Faces of Recovery Calendar).

As many of you know, I am starting to collect essays about recovery and living with drug addiction so that PATH can publish a book. If you enjoy writing and have a story to tell, let me know.

Finally, PATH is looking for a few good men (and women) to get actively involved with some of these projects. If any of the above projects resonates with your heart, call us at the PATH office (619-670-1184) and join the committee. It's time to put your work gloves on!

An All-Time High: Nearly 7 Million Behind Bars or on Probation or Parole

7/30/04 – Excerpts from Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics annual report on the US "correctional population".

- Almost 6.9 million Americans are in jail or prison or on probation or parole as of December 31, 2003. That number represents 3.2% of the adult population of the US. In other words, one out of every 32 adults in the US is under some form of correctional supervision.
- Some 691,000 people were in city or county jails, while nearly 1.4 million were in state or federal prisons, making a total of 2,078,570 people behind bars in the US, also an all-time high. Nearly half a million, or almost one-quarter, of these prisoners are doing time for drug crimes.
- In addition to the nearly 2.1 million prisoners, BJS found that slightly more than four million people were on probation and nearly 775,000 on parole.
- Drug offenders constituted 25% of all probationers.
- A staggering number of parolees are sent back to prison before finishing their supervision periods. Of those people discharged from parole, 38% were sent back to prison, either for technical violations such as failing a drug test or missing an appointment, or for committing new crimes. Another 9% have simply vanished. Nearly half of all parolees completed their supervisory periods without committing a new crime or violating the terms of parole.
- The continuing growth in the correctional population comes despite a decade of lower crime rates and the introduction of sentencing reforms in a number of states.

"What we are seeing here is the long-term effect of longer sentences," said Marc Mauer, assistant director of the Sentencing Project, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit which seeks alternatives to the heavy reliance on incarceration in the US. "Even though the number of people being convicted of crimes has not increased that much, the amount of time people are doing in prison has," he told DRCNet. "With policies like California's three-strikes law people are doing decades-long sentences. We recently did a report showing there are 127,000 people now serving life sentences. While there have been some positive developments, such as the drug offender diversion initiatives, those have been offset by these punitive sentencing policies...The percentage of people returning to prison for parole violations has doubled in the last 20 years. Often that is a function of inadequate services for parolees. They are drug tested and get revoked if they're using drugs, even though there is insufficient drug treatment. Community-based supervision agencies don't have the resources to help these people, and that leads to high failure rates. It's a vicious cycle," he said. "The crime is down, but arrest rates are not, especially with drugs, where the arrests are really more discretionary. It seems like an endless number of people are going to be arrested and incarcerated for drug offenses."

The Mental Health Services Act

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA, also known as Prop 63) provides funding to counties to expand and develop innovative, integrated services for children, adults and older adults. The MHSA was passed by California's voters in November 2004 as a result of a grassroots coalition intended to transform public mental health care.

A New PATH attended stakeholders' meetings in November and December held by San Diego County Mental Health Services in order to participate in the process of creating a plan to be approved by the state. We feel that substance abuse treatment services need to be included in the plan.

Proposition 36 Success

Proposition 36 has helped reclaim the lives of tens of thousands of Californians with substance-abuse problems, according to a major UCLA study of the impact of Prop. 36. That state-commissioned report also noted that this historic initiative has yielded excellent results during its first two years. Among the findings in the UCLA report:

- More than 66,000 people have accessed drug treatment in the first two years since Prop. 36 passed.
- Prop. 36 clients are succeeding in treatment at rates similar to those of clients in other diversion programs, such as drug courts.
- Approximately half of all Prop. 36 participants in each of the first two years were entering drug treatment for the first time.
- A majority of Prop. 36 outpatient clients received at least 90 days of treatment.

Proposition 36's success rates are impressive. According to the Drug Policy Alliance, they are comparable to those in other diversion programs, such as drug courts, even though the participants on average have longer histories of drug addiction, and half of them have never had access to treatment before.

Self-Reflection Garden at Donovan State Prison

A New PATH and inmates in the HOPE program at Donovan State Prison created the Self-Reflection Garden in 2004. The Garden represents a safe haven of color and life, where individuals can look within and find hope and serenity to begin the process of recovery.

Inmates gave their enthusiasm, sweat and spirit to this project. Phase 2 that included a walking labyrinth was completed in July and the project is ongoing. In December Caroline Stewart, Lia Metz and Gretchen Burns Bergman met with Warden Hernandez to present a plaque of sponsors that will be placed in the administration building. Difficulties with upkeep of the garden when inmates are in lockdown were discussed and the Warden agreed to put an irrigation system in to alleviate the problem.

Pictured: Sharon Gibson, Stephanie Terrones, and Gretchen Burns Bergman

In December Sharon Gibson and Stephanie Terrones from the HOPE program visited the PATH office to present a framed certificate of appreciation to PATH in recognition of valuable contributions to the H.O.P.E. Through Recovery Substance Abuse Program at the R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility.

They also expressed gratitude to PATH for raising funds for the Thanksgiving Dinner for inmate participants in the Self-Reflection Garden.

At the ceremony for the opening of Phase 2 of the garden, inmate composer Pierre Alexander performed an original rap song "Givin' Somethin' Back", that moved many in the audience to tears. PATH arranged to record the song through Burnin' Productions and the CD is now available for sale for $10 at the PATH office. Proceeds of the sales will go to ongoing maintenance of the garden.

According to the environmental crew inmates: "We now have gained positive relationships, personal pride in ourselves, respect for hard work and a job well done."

Editor's Note: See the cover of the Alexander CD and ordering information on the CD on page 2.

California's Pharmacy Syringe Law

Governor Schwarzenegger signed SB 1125, which was sponsored by Senator Vasconcellos, which allows pharmacies to sell adults up to ten syringes without a prescription in December 2004.

"Pharmacy sale was a long time coming, and it's going to save lives in California. The Alliance is doing everything we can to make sure that the new law is implemented properly throughout the state", said Simeon Gant, deputy director of the Drug Policy Alliance's California Capital Office.

On the art of "Being Cool"

By Caroline Stewart, LCSW

On the last day of school before Christmas vacation, I decided to surprise my 13-year-old son, Hugh, by picking him up early from his after school program. Hugh and his classmates had had a fun-filled day on a holiday field trip to see the movie, Lemony Snicket.

In addition, they planned to Christmas shop in the mall. Hugh was especially excited about the outing because he had shopping money burning a hole in his pocket. He was eager to buy Christmas presents for his father and me and proudly announced some of his gift ideas. I was also pleased with the field trip because I knew that Hugh would have thoughtful supervision from his teachers.

Hugh has an older brother who has a drug problem and despite my best intentions, I tend to be a somewhat overprotective mother. All in all, however, the mall field trip promised to be a most excellent outing and I was eager to hear all about it when I drove up to the six to six office.

Hugh came dancing out of the classroom smiling and full of that "hooray, two weeks off" look on his face. However, when he entered the car I noticed that he was hiding his right wrist from me. "What have you got there?" I asked. I was hoping to see shopping bags brimming with Christmas largesse.

"Oh, nothing," he said. Now Hugh is a chatterbox and the "oh, nothing" was like walking through Macy's front doors with the security lock on a mink. I looked over at Hugh's wrist and I was shocked to see a black leather wristband with huge silver metal spikes poking out from under his sweatshirt. I nearly drove off the road.

"Where did you get that?" I asked. Hugh explained that he and a group of friends had discovered a wonderful store in the mall called Hot Topics. Hot Topics, explained Hugh, has all of the really "cool stuff" that kids like. Having let the cat out of the bag, Hugh proudly displayed his purchase and explained that the spikes were removable. I am certain that he was trying to reassure me. TMI ! I wanted to pass out.

My mind was flooded with catastrophic pictures of Hugh surrounded by pitbulls and monster trucks. I had images of him walking through crowds of people parting around him like the Red Sea. Worst of all, hateful memories of the Culture Clash with our older son spilled in causing me to wonder if the dreaded bracelet was the beginning of the end. Spikes today, drug addiction tomorrow.

"I hate it." I said. "What do you think people will think when they see you with that bracelet on?" Hugh didn't know that I answered my own question in my head: "Hugh's mother is a pushover. She might as well start serving drugs for breakfast. Imagine letting that boy wear that bracelet." Hugh responded insightfully: "All of the really cool kids don't speak to me. They think I'm the teacher's pet. I'll bet they will talk to me when I wear this."

"Oh boy," I said to myself. "What do I do now?" "Who let you buy that thing?" I said. He stated that his teachers were all present when he purchased the treasured jewelry and that they informed him that he could not wear the bracelet during school hours.

Images of my older son wearing a rasta hat to Christmas dinner danced in my head. I felt deep betrayal from the shepherds who were not guarding their sheep. I began to cry.

"Mom, you always do this." Hugh said. "Just because I like this bracelet does not mean that I want to grow up to be a bad guy. Anyway, I am not a gangster. This bracelet tells people that I am a punk rocker." Hugh genuinely thought that he was making

continued on page 11

1/4 page ad here

"Being Cool"

continued from page 4

an excellent argument for keeping and wearing the bracelet.

I dried my tears while stuck on the on ramp and drew a line in the sand, "You are not to wear that bracelet to church!" You might be wondering why I caved in. Why didn't I tell him to take the bracelet off and hand it over? I guess it's because I really do understand that profound visceral need in all of us to be "cool". Heavens, I'm no spring chicken and I still want to be cool. I just bought a hot pink handbag at the Rotary luncheon and walked around with it feeling on top of the world. I get an instant "I'm cool" sensation walking into Starbucks. The people in there seem so relaxed and progressive. I think the coffee is bitter and the expense kills me, but I sure do love the cool feeling that comes over me standing in the Starbucks line. Yes, I can relate to wanting to feel cool.

In 1966, I was the "salad girl" in the West Commons at San Diego State College. Dreams of going away to college did not pan out. I wore a little white waitress uniform and a hairnet. Needless to say, I did not look cool. I pined to be mysterious and exotic. My boyfriend called me "apple" because he said that I always looked so wholesome and Midwestern. Believe me, I would have done anything to challenge that opinion of me.

I began to wear miniskirts and boots. I smoked Russian Black and Gold cigarettes and wore fish net stockings. I read **The New Yorker** magazine (truthfully, I just read the cartoons) even though I had never been out of San Diego and had absolutely no idea what New York was really like. I thought that being depressed made me interesting. So why should I be freaked out about a punk rocker bracelet?

Hugh's Christmas shopping trip and his love affair with a spiked bracelet helped me to get clear about a lot of things that have been on my mind lately. I have to stop comparing Hugh with his older brother. Hugh has nothing whatsoever to do with his brother's drug problem and should have the opportunity to be as "cool" as any other teen.

I need to back off and let Hugh take more risks. I cannot ultimately protect Hugh from drug use. This is something we have to do for ourselves. Symbols of the counter culture and drug use are not the same. Wearing a spiked bracelet or hip-hop pants is not a pathway to drug use. Whether we like it or not, we live in a virtual soup of counter culture symbols and products and young adults will gravitate to these things to tell us: "We are not you!" We grownups need to celebrate our youth and their creativity and remember that it's okay to be outrageous: so much better a punk rocker bracelet than a fix.

Complex Genetics Tied to High Cost of Brain Disorders; Majority of Costs Related to Addiction

Researchers from NIDA and The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine report that more than 40 percent of the costs associated with brain and nervous system disorders are related to genetics, and the largest single portion of these costs are due to addictions. The scientists point out that the costs are not solely related to healthcare, but also include dollars spent on nontreatment practices, such as incarceration.

Brain and nervous system disorders may cost the United States more than $1 trillion annually, and much of this burden stems from the influence of complex genetic factors rather than single-gene effects. At least 40 percent of addiction vulnerability among the U.S. population is genetic, and almost all of that is due to the effects of multiple genes.

The researchers estimate that the American public spends more than $200 billion on annual costs related to addiction.

WHAT IT MEANS

Increasing what we know about genetic susceptibility to brain and nervous system diseases, including addictions, can enhance our ability to prevent the development of such disorders and reduce the economic costs associated with them. Researchers should be encouraged to investigate gene variants, as well as environmental factors, that influence the development of these diseases.

Dr. George Uhl and Dr. Robert Grow published their study in the March 2004 issue of the Archives of General Psychiatry.

A New PATH
2527 Doubletree Road
Spring Valley, CA 91978

Mission Statement

PATH is a voluntary organization of concerned parents of individuals suffering from the disease of addiction. Our PURPOSE is to partner with health care professionals, the justice system, recovering addicts and concerned members of society to seek better understanding of the illness and "therapeutic justice" for substance-related criminal activities.

Our GOAL is to reduce recidivism, save lives, heal families and move toward a healthier society.

Attention PATH Members...

For immediate and up-to-date information, please send us your e-mail address and we can inform you electronically! Our email address at PATH is anewpath@cox.net

History

PATH grew out of a series of pre-Substance Abuse Summit meetings with parents, Superior Court Judges and officers of the criminal justice system in the Spring of 1999. Founding members are Gretchen Burns Bergman, Sylvia Liwerant and Tom O'Donnell.

PATH would like to thank:

⇒ **The California Endowment**
⇒ **The Fund for Drug Policy Reform of the Tides Foundation**
⇒ **Las Patronas**
⇒ **Join Together/Demand Treatment**
⇒ **San Diego County, Supervisor Ron Roberts**

For their generous support!

Please Visit our website: www.anewpath.cc

Our Proposals for Alternative Sentencing

1) Long-term mandatory rehabilitation in a structured alcohol and drug-free recovery environment for non-violent offenders.

2) If the nature of the crime does not allow for this alternative, sentencing should include immediate placement in a rehabilatation and recovery program within the prison system.

3) Upon release from prison or recovery homes, substance abusers should be mandated to a transitional program in a sober-living environment to prepare them to re-enter society.