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Vol III November 2000

Co-Directors' Message

By Silvia Liwerant

There is a group of physicians at Brown University, at their Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies program, who believe that drug addiction is a medical issue and not a legal issue.

They have formed a group called "Physician Leadership on National Drug Policy". Their membership consists of 37 distinguished physicians from virtually every medical specialty and with extensive health care policy experience. They are leaders at academic and medical research institutions, hospitals, medical centers and national professional societies across the U.S.

Their membership includes a former Surgeon General, two Assistant Secretaries of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a Nobel Laureate, and

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By Gretchen Burns Bergman

I would like to thank the Board of Directors and all the people who have donated their time and passion to make a difference. We have made great strides and our voices are being heard.

I would like to share with you the text of my speech presented before the Meth-Amphetamine Task Force in September. It articulates my position on the beneficial aspects of Proposition 36:

I am the co-founder of A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment and Healing) a non-profit organization of parents, concerned citizens and community leaders working together to advocate for **better understanding of and treatment for** the disease of addiction. Our primary goal is for mandated (coerced) treatment in structured long-term recovery facilities within the community instead of incarceration for non-violent addicted offenders.

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GOBLINS WITH A CAUSE!!!

OCTOBER 28, 2000 7PM
Grace Conlee & John Micetich
4817 Vista Street, Kensington

GREAT FOOD, FUN & PRIZES

Indulge in Grace's sumptuous food. Enjoy some great entertainment. We'll raffle off door prizes for really fun stuff. There will be an auction for a Burns-Bergman Champagne Cruise and a personal portrait, valued at \$1700, graciously donated by noted portrait artist, Toni Mizisin.

COSTUME OPTIONAL

You can go all out in costume to disguise your identify, or just wear a thought provoking sign. Both best costume and most provocative sign will win prizes! What other way to have a fun evening, good food, interesting conversations, terrific entertainment, and all for our cause!

Only \$35 per person. RSVP by October 27. For more information, call: (619) 281-1954 or (619) 563-4620! Feel free to invite your friends!

(We extend our gratitude in advance to the generous contributors of auction items: Dr. David Bergman and Gretchen Burns Bergman, a Champagne Cruise; portrait artist, Toni Mizisin, one of her fabulous personal portraits; Gold Hill Vineyards, of Placerville, CA, wine.)

Editor's Note

This issue of the newsletter is packed full of information on Proposition 36, the "Drug Treatment Initiative". PATH's endorsement of Prop 36 is official. We are on the list of "Organizations and Individuals who Endorse Prop. 36", on the Yes on 36 website (www.drugreform.org). Our support of this initiative came after careful review of the text of the initiative and answers from the campaign organizers to our questions. We are convinced that this proposition is a right, needed step in the direction of PATH's stated goals. It is a beginning.

Included on pages 3 & 4 is the text of the brochure issued by the Yes on 36 campaign. It is an excellent brochure and answers many questions about the initiative and rebuts several arguments against. I urge you to visit the Prop 36 website and to read all of the information in your Voter Information Guide about the initiative.

As a volunteer member of the Yes on 36 campaign, I've had the opportunity to listen to some of the arguments put forth by its opponents. It can't be possible that they have actually read the initiative. Most of what "they" claim just is not true. Read for yourself and you'll see. Then decide.

About those letters to the Union Trib...

If you haven't noticed, our hometown paper is tilted to the right. The Opinion Page editorial articles are written by any one of six writers who can write what they want about any subject as long as it falls in line with the UT "party line". Accuracy is optional. It has been discouraging to respond to some of the outrageous articles in the editor's column and not see our letters get printed. In this issue of the PATH newsletter, we have reprinted some of the letters to the UT editor that did get printed and a few that didn't. We appreciate the time PATH members have spent responding to the inaccuracies perpetuated by the Trib.

A few new items.....

Beginning with this issue, we will accept paid advertisements from organizations with compatible goals to PATH's. Contact me at cangell@home.com if you are interested.

Beginning with the next issue, we will accept articles and letters to the Editor of the PATH Newsletter from our readers. We would like to hear from you.

And last, effective with this issue, Gretchen has turned over all of the Managing Editor duties to me. Thanks, Gretchen.

Carolyn Angell

LOS ANGELES--Supporters of Prop 36 will introduce their new chairwoman, Gretchen Burns Bergman, on Wednesday. Ms. Burns Bergman's son has battled drug addiction and was never offered treatment--only prison time.

Ms. Burns Bergman is challenging Martin Sheen, the chairman for the opposition campaign, to a debate. Sheen's son, Charlie, was able to avoid jail time because he had the means and influence to get into an exclusive residential treatment facility in Malibu. Bergman wants to know why Sheen doesn't think poor and middle class Californians should have the same opportunity that his son Charlie had.

(From Prop 36 Media Alert 9/26/00)

Gretchen Burns Bergman

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We are also speaking out to help to **reduce the stigma of the disease**. I am the mother of two sons who are heroin addicts. They are both in their 20s and their addictions have led them to become involved with the criminal justice system. One has spent several terms in prison because of non-violent offenses related to his drug addiction and relapses.

I have witnessed first-hand the devastation of this disease and the destructive effects of the prison environment. I have visited state prison week after week and helplessly watched as my son assimilated into the prison culture, while getting deeper and deeper into his substance abuse and further away from the recovery he needs. He actually learned to use needles for Heroin behind bars and now has Hepatitis C, a substantial problem in prison. He learned to walk the walk and talk the talk.

The skills he needed to learn to survive in a prison environment are the direct opposite of those needed to survive on the outside. Punitive incarceration does nothing toward rehabilitation. After months of being warehoused in cells, he is released back into society, still an addict, with no self esteem, no job skills, and now he is an angry ex-con. What do you think his chances are of returning to prison? My son is not an isolated case. He is just one of the 40,000 convictions per year in California for drug possession.

I know that there is a difference between a criminal who uses drugs, and a drug addict that commits a crime to get the drugs he **feels he needs to survive**. I am talking about the latter, and our prisons are overflowing with our sons and daughters whose lives are being wasted and destroyed by their disease. Society's mismanagement and misunderstanding of this public health problem compounds the matter severely.

The health care community, working together with the justice system can provide a better answer--and that is what Proposition 36 is all about: Mandating treatment instead of incarceration. Treatment works! Punitive incarceration doesn't.

I have great respect for the successful efforts of the Drug Courts. However, they have only been able to reach about two percent of the people who need alternative sentencing.

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A New PATH newsletter is published quarterly by the Parents for Addiction Treatment and Healing non-profit organization.

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Liwerant

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the editors of Science, The Journal of the American Medical Association and The New England Journal of Medicine.

They have stated that substance abuse should be accorded parity with other chronic, relapsing conditions insofar as access to care, treatment benefits, and clinical outcomes are concerned, and the community based health partnerships are essential to solve these problems.

Their Consensus Statement:

“Addiction to illegal drugs is a major national problem that creates impaired health, harmful behaviors and major economic and social burdens. Addiction to illegal drugs is a chronic illness. Addiction treatment requires continuity of care, including acute and follow-up care strategies, management of any relapses, and satisfactory outcome measurements.

We are impressed by the growing body of evidence that enhanced medical and public health approaches are the most effective method of reducing harmful use of illegal drugs. These approaches offer great opportunities to decrease the burden on individuals and communities, particularly when they are integrated into multi-disciplinary and collaborative approaches.

The current emphasis—on use of the criminal justice system and interdiction to reduce illegal drug use and the harmful effects of illegal drugs—is not adequate to address these problems.”

They feel that there is there is genetic predisposition for addiction, as much as there is for heart disease, diabetes and hypertension. However, an individual’s behavior can influence the outcome of many medical conditions, like cigarette smoking and obesity can contribute to the onset of coronary heart disease. Drug abuse, no doubt contributes to the onset of drug addiction. No person smokes or eats fatty foods with the purpose of developing heart disease, and no drug user uses with the hope of becoming addicted. Voluntary control over behavior is a very difficult issue for a drug addict, as much as it is for an obese hypertensive person.

“For many chronic diseases, the damage caused by the disease is often progressive, even with good management. In comparison with other chronic diseases, drug addiction is a manageable condition and very frequently, robust health can be achieved for individuals who are successfully treated”.

We, in A New PATH, believe in this. We think that addiction is a medical and behavioral problem and not a legal one.

Quilt Project to Benefit PATH

A major fundraising event will kick off in October, thanks to the generosity and creativity of Helen Teisher.

Helen, a long-time advocate for the mentally ill, has lovingly stitched a beautiful quilt that will be raffled off at PATH’s 2nd Anniversary general meeting in April of 2001. Tickets are \$5 each, or \$25 for a packet of six. Tickets will be mailed as well as being available at our November general meeting.

Helen is a founder of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, San Diego chapter. It was through her tireless efforts and persistence that the Alliance became a reality and a force in shaping attitudes and programs for the mentally ill at the local, state, and national levels.

Quilting was a big part of Helen’s life during her childhood days in an Arizona community where quilting was an integral part of women’s social life.

She returned to quilting 20 years ago, taking up a “quiet” activity to help her pass many sleepless nights during a stressful time of her life. It was during this time that she and her husband, Hank, were worried sick about their mentally ill son. The options were precious few for his diagnosed schizophrenia, let alone receiving the help and treatment he needed. Thus started both her activism on behalf of the mentally ill and her return to quilting.

Helen said, “Working in the field of mental illness has been creative, rewarding and therapeutic.” So has her quilting which has resulted in creation of more than 150 quilts to date. Some of Helen’s quilts have raised funds for causes she believes in. Some of her quilts have raised between \$3000 to \$4000 for those causes. For more information about this PATH fundraising activity, call: Grace Conlee at (619)281-1954.

We also believe that together with you, the members of our communities, we can accomplish our goal of more long-term treatment and less incarceration, more Recovery in the prisons and jails, better after-care once the addict has been through a program, in or out of jail. We believe in more effective help and less punishment, more compassion and understanding and less criticism and judgment.

We need your help and support for more rehabilitation centers, more availability of jobs for the recovering addict, more effective judicial procedures, and removal of the stigma of addiction through the understanding of the complexity of the disease.

A New PATH
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It Takes a Community

On Saturday, September 9, 2000 A New PATH and the Mental Health Association (MHA) in San Diego County presented *It Takes a Community*. . . , an elegant evening event at the Emerald Wyndham Plaza. The event benefited MHA and A New PATH, organizations who share a commitment to provide treatment and recovery services for individuals whose lives have been damaged by addictions.

The inaugural gala featured a VIP reception in the fabulous Emerald Shapery Penthouse. Among the honored guests were Senator Dede Alpert, Dr. Jerry Gold, President of the MHA in San Diego, Sylvia Liwerant, Co-Director of A New PATH, and Co-Chairs Lorraine Watson and Gretchen Burns Bergman (also Co-director of A New PATH).

A silent auction, a photographic exhibit called "Shattered Lives", and a book signing by Maralys Wills, author of *Save My Son* was held in the foyer. Dinner, a live auction, entertainment and an awards ceremony followed in the Crystal Ballroom.

Joe Bauer, KFMB Radio talk show personality was the emcee for the auction. "After Five" provided dinner and dancing music, and Gretchen Productions presented an entertainment interlude that included Salsa dancers and singers. The highlight of this showcase was the emotional finale when people in recovery were invited on the dance floor. They held candles to celebrate their efforts to overcome their disease. It was beautiful and moving.

Rory Devine, KNSD 7/39 News was the emcee of the awards ceremony. Honorees were recognized for their contributions in helping reduce the stigma of the disease of addiction and mental illness. They included David A. Deitch, Ph.D., Marc A. Schuckit, M.D., Superior Court Judge David Ryan, California State Senator Dede Alpert, Helen Teisher, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and Maralys Wills, author.

At our PATH general meeting each month, we invite a speaker to address the many questions that parents and citizens have concerning the disease of substance abuse, recovery and the criminal justice system. Recent guest speakers include:



David W. Ryan, Municipal Court Judge. Father of North County Community Court. The County's first Drug Court

Linda Hughes, Attorney, Law Office of Public Defender

Dr. Barrera, MD., Psychiatrist of the Metropolitan Correctional Center and Director of the forensic Unit at Alvarado Parkway Institute

Dr. David Bergmen, MD FAPA, Medical Director of Charter API Hospital

Timothy Tower, Superior Court Judge

Dr. Ken Khory, President of the San Diego Psychiatric Association

Alma C. Saenz, Resident of S&S Ranch Recovery Home, and recovering addict speaker

Learn more about Proposition 36 and why we are in favor of it! October 3, 2000: Panel Discussion, **Dr. Jerry Rand**, Addiction Specialist; **Dan Holsenback**, Attorney; **Ingrid Fermin**, Alternative Sentencing; **Gretchen Burns Bergman**, Spokesperson Proposition 36; **David Santos**, Addicts Perspective; **John Micetich**, Financial Advisor.

Thank you to these people for sharing their expertise. We will continue to bring in guest speakers each month to serve the educational purpose of our organization, and we will continue to reach out to other groups and organizations to share our knowledge of the disease of addiction and our perspectives on effective treatment and recovery for this illness.

We meet the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at Charter API Hospital. Because of the general election our next meeting is December 5, 2000. Remember to vote!

Gretchen Burns Bergman

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Proposition 36 will give the opportunity of treatment to a far greater number. Approximately 25,000 California offenders would qualify regardless of race, culture or creed, and this will apply to every county in the State. It puts \$120 million in new funds into treatment programs that are so badly needed. These programs must all be licensed and certified by the state.

I know that the justice system is worried about losing the power to keep the offender in treatment, but Judges can impose any range of conditions of probation in addition to treatment--including vocational training and family counseling. The truth is that for an addict lost in his disease, the threat of jail, being homeless or even death doesn't deter him. Jail is sometimes an easier solution than recovery, since they don't have to give up their drugs in prison. The threat of serious consequences--including jail if they don't comply with treatment--still hangs over their heads. If they violate three times, probation is revoked.

I'd like to address **accountability**. I am not soft on crime. I just feel there is no lesson learned from warehousing people behind bars. Why not give them a chance to pay back their debt by becoming a contributing member of society?

As a taxpayer, I must say that the wasted money on the war on drugs is horrible, especially since the addict and his family are the true victims of this war. Arizona taxpayers saved \$2.5 million in one year by treating instead of incarcerating non-violent offenders, and California stands to save millions more.

This is what I understand: Proposition 36 requires probation and drug treatment--up to 18 months for all first and second time drug possession offenders. It requires completion of these programs. If they do turn their lives around with this court-supervised treatment they may later have their drug convictions dismissed. If they fail, they can be dropped and re-sentenced. This opportunity may help them to break the destructive cycle.

How many parents of a teenager or young adult can say with certainty that their child has never tried an illegal substance? My sons were raised in an intact home--with plenty of soccer, little league, tennis, swimming, music lessons, care, love and attention--in a nice neighborhood--but it still happened to them. Let's change the way we deal with this problem of epidemic proportions today, starting with voting yes on Proposition 36.