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Vol VII March 2002

President's Message

Now that Proposition 36 has been enthusiastically voted into law by our state, A NEW PATH has focused on its implementation.

Many committees were formed to bring quality treatment to those eligible under that proposition. A large measure of this responsibility falls on two areas: the health care professionals and the probation department.

To this end, our Executive Director has participated in the Treatment Committee and most recently, Gretchen Burns-Bergman and I sat down with the probation department and shared ideas and suggestions concerning the following areas:

- * parents mentoring other parents,
- * parents as effective partners with probation,
- * successful transition from institution to community,
- * parent sponsors for probationers without positive family resources.

Likewise accountability and responsibility were discussed in view of gaining employment within the community as well as the community services available.

A NEW PATH, in association with the probation department and the treatment providers, will attempt to assist in educating parents and providing information on resources and treatment facilities... and perhaps we will in turn assist individuals in overcoming their illness and becoming positive members of their own communities

Tom O'Donnell
President, Board of Directors

Executive Director's Message

The Road to Recovery

by Gretchen Burns Bergman
from the "Psychiatric Newsletter"

I recently took a group tour of Donovan State Prison and was able to see inside the fenced cement facility that had warehoused my son for so many months when he was incarcerated there for drug offenses.

The experience I had as a professional visitor was markedly different than the experience I had had as a parent. Always, when I visited before, I felt a sense of shame, nervous anticipation, sorrow and anger.

Many times I was treated as if I, too, had committed a crime. Each time I left I felt guilty that I couldn't wait to feel my freedom again, and yet so many people who had no business being there were left behind to years of lockup.

Even after experiencing the prison on this occasion as a community leader, and having it presented to me with all its best programs and in the best possible light, I came away with more conviction than ever that non-violent drug addicts should not be sentenced to this cold, hard, dangerous and potentially violent atmosphere.

We had very meaningful dialogue with people in the Amity Program, a voluntary therapeutic community inside Yard 3. We also talked to counselors at Mental Health Systems' new involuntary treatment community there. These small (200 slots each), but successful recovery programs are

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Editor's Note

You may have noticed some important changes to the Board of Directors positions on page one. Instead of a director and two assistant directors, PATH now has an Executive Director (an appointed, non-board member), President and Vice-President.

Those positions are held by the three PATH founding members, Gretchen Burns Bergman, Tom O'Donnell and Sylvia Liwerant. This change was made for clarity and to create a board structure more consistent with other organizations.

With this issue, we will have a regular Directors' Message and a Presidents' Message. A new featured contributor is David Beck Brown who represents PATH on Prison Reform issues and is a member of the Board of Directors. His articles are found under "From the Inside" (on page 5 this issue).

There are three important subjects that need attention. The first is member participation. As with most organizations, ninety percent of the work is done by ten percent of the people. PATH needs your help.

As an advocacy group, your voices in our community are critical if we are to be successful. Please write letters to the editor of the UT, contact your representatives about important issues and volunteer to help whenever and wherever possible. This doesn't need to consume vast quantities of your time. A few minutes writing an email to the Trib, a call to Boxer or Feinstein's office—all help.

Many on line organizations even provide form letters regarding important issues for you to use or as a platform to create your own letter. The drcnet and Drug Policy Alliance (formerly Lindesmith Center-Drug Policy Foundation) are two good examples of sites with excellent form letters.

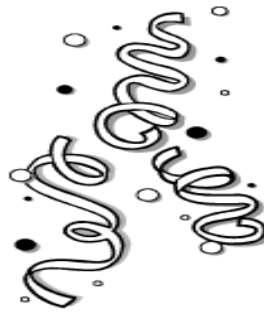
The second issue is NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard). Proposition 36 passed by a significant margin—over sixty percent. Yet, when recovery centers try to open in our communities the opposition is fierce. All of us at PATH must do all we can to educate others of the benefits these facilities provide to our neighborhoods as well as to those in recovery. Attend council meetings, write letters, talk to your friends and neighbors. You do and can make a difference.

Third, become *active dues paying members*. PATH has a mailing list of over 1200 and a paid membership that is disproportionately less. While we appreciate the expanding readership, yes, we need your money and support. Please join. There is a membership form included in each newsletter. We accept credit cards! We make it easy.

Why is it important to have a large paid membership? Easy, it's influence. More attention gets paid to us when we have a large, and especially active, membership. To effect change, we must have an expanded presence. The amazing, untiring, relentless efforts of Gretchen, Tom and Sylvia have carried this organization for a long time. Because of them, PATH does have an important presence in the San Diego community, but they need your help. Join today!

Carolyn Angell
Publications Editor

It Takes A Community 2002



It's not too late! Now is the perfect time to help with the planning and preparations for this year's annual fall mega event. It Takes A Community recognizes and salutes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to our community in the area of addiction treatment and mental health treatment. The event is sponsored by PATH and the Mental Health Association. Call the PATH office at 619-670-1184 to find out how you can be part of throwing this magnificent party!

Alternative News Sources on the Internet:

www.drugpolicy.org
www.narconews.com
www.drcnet.org
www.reconsider.org

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Letter to the Editor

This past Christmas I had an experience with pain like no other that I have ever felt in my life. It began in my abdomen around midnight and got worse and worse for hours and hours. It was the worst pain I've ever felt and I have felt some pain. It became so excruciating that at 7:00 a.m. I had my wife drive me to the hospital Emergency Room.

Checking into the ER was unbelievably agonizing because while I was dying—I thought—they were asking questions, filling out papers and prolonging my extreme agony. Finally, I got admitted and put into a bed.

They couldn't treat me yet, but they could alleviate my horrific pain—which they did. They gave me demerol through an IV drip. Oh, blessed powerful, *legal* stuff. I wasn't fixed, but at least my pain diminished. At least I could stand being alive while I waited for a permanent cure.

Then, even during my agony, a thought occurred to me: if this is what I feel like and my problem is probably relatively transitory, what must it feel like to have cancer? What must the pain be like of something that actually kills? I couldn't imagine that amount and intensity of pain! How could anything be worse than what I was experiencing?

Then another thought occurred to me: how could anyone deny these cancer victims the means by which to alleviate their pain no matter from what source it might come? If pain could be reduced by sniffing dirty socks, what would it matter? Who would it harm? Who cares, if they hurt less? So what. If I could've gotten relief from my killer pain by

smoking marijuana, do you think I would've done it? You're darn right, I would've! I'd have smoked a dead rat at that point, if I even thought it might have a chance of reducing my pain. The point is... when you hurt, you don't care how you get rid of the hurt, you just want the hurt to go away.

It shouldn't matter to anyone else. It shouldn't be of anyone else's concern. It should not be anyone else's right to stop me and you from alleviating our pain. It definitely should not be the right of our United States federal government to prevent us from attempting by whatever means possible to not hurt. We, the voters of California overwhelmingly approved medical marijuana. It is our state's right. It is every Californian's individual right.

February 12th, the federal DEA, totally disregarding the expressed will of us Californians and our California law, raided at least two California medical marijuana clubs and made arrests. The occasion? Asa Hutchinson, the DEA Chief, was in San Francisco to make a speech at the Commonwealth Club. Coincidence?

Oh, by the way, back to my pain. I had my gall bladder removed. Just a gall bladder. What must the pain of cancer be like? Do you think Hutchinson even cares?

Call your US Senators' LA offices. Dianne Feinstein is 310-914-7300. Barbara Boxer is 213-894-5000. Tell them how you feel. Don't wait until you get the pain of cancer.

Jim Land
PATH Board of Directors

*"Wise sayings often fall on barren ground;
but a kind word is never thrown away."*

Sir Arthur Helps

*"Many strokes, though with a little axe, Hew
down and fell the hardest timbered oak."*

William Shakespeare

From the drcnet website:

Britain: Parliamentary Committee Will Recommend Cannabis Decrim, Ecstasy Down-Scheduling, More Heroin Prescription

According to a Sunday report in the London Observer, the parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee, which is charged with reviewing Britain's drug laws, has concluded that the country should adopt a Dutch-style cannabis policy and move MDMA (ecstasy) from the toughest drug schedule to the middle drug schedule. The committee will also call for a greater emphasis on harm reduction strategies, including broader use of prescription heroin for addicts, the newspaper reported.

"The Chairman, Member of Parliament Chris Mullins, is set on these recommendations, and the majority of the committee is behind him," a source close to the committee

told the Observer. Two more conservative members of the committee are said to be opposed.

"For such an influential body to be suggesting such significant reforms is indicative of the pressing need for change," Drugscope director Roger Howard told the newspaper. Drugscope is a leading (British) government-funded drug research and advocacy center (<http://www.drugscope.org.uk>).

While the Labor government of Tony Blair has taken great pains to avoid being seen as "soft on drugs," it will now have to decide how to respond to the committee. The committee's recommendation on cannabis, for example, goes further than the down-scheduling of the drug announced last year by Home Secretary David Blunkett.

Under Blunkett's plan, while personal use and small-scale dealing in cannabis would be informally tolerated, users could still possibly face up to two years in prison. The committee is calling for a Dutch model, where the weed is

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Executive Director's Message

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just a small light in a maze of darkness.

The current capacity at Donovan is 4,500 inmates and, despite the implementation of Proposition 36, the overcrowding remains greater than 160%. Obviously, significantly more treatment slots are necessary for the large population of substance abusers. Approximately 85% of people behind bars are there for alcohol and drug-related crimes.

The most difficult moment during the tour was going into a cell and experiencing the overwhelming feeling of oppression, especially with the knowledge of how many hours a prisoner spends confined to these quarters.

One of the men in the Amity program described it to me this way when I asked him why the racial hatred and violence had to be a part of the prison culture: "If you treat people like dogs, they act like dogs".

I was told by one of the guards that it is actually so nice at this facility that many inmates want to stay. I found it especially frustrating and sad that becoming "institutionalized" was regarded positively by some.

Besides changing society's overall concepts about the nature of substance abuse, we need to totally dispel the theory that "punitive justice" for drug addicts is any kind of "justice" at all.

The passage of Proposition 36 in California, which mandates treatment rather than incarceration for non-violent drug offenders, was a giant step forward, but there are other laws, policies, and procedures that require change. Because of California's Three Strikes Law, many individuals are

spending a lifetime behind bars for minor offenses. This terribly flawed legislation needs to be amended so that it only applies to serious or violent felonies.

The current law often mandates 25 years to life for a third strike, and there are countless cases where drug possession and petty theft count as a third strike. Nearly half of the 60,000 inmates serving second and third strike sentences were convicted of non-violent, non-serious crimes.

California, with the largest prison system in the World, is the only State where a person can serve a life sentence for a non-violent crime. We are seeing people serving longer sentences behind bars for drug "crimes" than for murder. Three strikes should apply to murder, rape, child molestation, and other violent crimes, while prisons should be used to lock up these people who are dangerous to our society.

The Attorney General of the State of California prepared this title for the amendment which will, hopefully, be on our ballots in November 2002: "Limiting Three Strikes Law to Violent and Serious Felonies Initiative Statute".

Short term savings of as much as \$250 million from reduced prison operations are estimated, but the real savings will be in the lives and futures of those who have fallen under the vengeful arm of this draconian law.

In order to build a stronger and healthier tomorrow, we need not only continue the positive quest of improving our knowledge and skills in finding solutions to the problems of substance abuse, but also to change policies that are detrimental to such progress.

From the Inside

with David Beck-Brown

Drug Addiction

I once knew a prison inmate by the name of Scott who died recently from a drug addiction. Scott had attended art classes I taught to inmates.

My classes were officially known as a "leisure time activity." A leisure time activity is something an inmate willingly attends and his participation does not influence the length of his prison sentence.

Inmates participate in these activities for personal reasons, such as to reduce stress, or to maintain humanity while in prison. Attending church service is another example of a leisure time activity.

Prison can be a shocking, dehumanizing experience for someone like Scott who had never been in prison before. He was a good student and liked to draw pictures of old houses.

After his release from prison, I saw him on occasion, at community art receptions and often passed him while walking along city streets.

Once released into the community, convicts bring their prison experience with them. The lessons they learned behind prison walls indirectly affect us all. They shop where we shop, and occasionally, may even share the same service station restroom key.

Scott told me that drawing while in prison kept him from going insane. It isolated him from the other inmates and lessened their relentless pressuring.

The other convicts would attempt to coerce his participation in jailhouse drug deals. Scott said drugs were plentiful in prison. Returning from family visits, his cellmate would defecate a drug-filled balloon into the cell toilet and offer him a taste of the contraband.

Scott said older convicts often forced young kids to do their drug bidding for them. Scott said he never used illicit drugs while in prison. He had military experience and was strong enough and mature enough to resist the other convicts.

However, he accepted the free cigarettes provided to the prison by the tobacco industry and free packs of cigarettes were available from prison staff. That was over twenty years ago when we knew less about drugs and addictions than we do now.

Like most inmates serving time, Scott chained-smoked when he could, from the time he awoke to the time he fell asleep, day after day, week after week. The cigarettes were packaged in a red generic pack with the word Domino printed across it. Once all the cigarettes were smoked and

the packs empty, the inmates would carefully unwrap the package and tightly fold the paper into strips then weave them into colorful picture frames, jewelry boxes and crosses. Dozens of wrappings were enlaced together to create a thick, stiff vest. The vest could easily be sold to an inmate fearing an assault. Worn beneath a shirt, the vest could slow the penetration of a makeshift shank.

Scott telephoned me recently to say goodbye. He had inoperative lung cancer and died three months later. Prisons have since discontinued providing inmates with free cigarettes. However, other addictive drugs are available "inside" as they are in all communities.

Eradicating the use of illicit drugs in our prisons is possible. However, the implementation of such harsh measures could require a redefinition of the word "humanity."

Eliminating these drugs would probably require us to stop all direct contact with prison inmates. They would no longer be able to receive family visits or to be attended by prison staff. All parcels and mail arriving from the "outside world" would also need to be stopped. A sophisticated closed-circuit television monitoring system would be required to watch every inmate. If he was not already mentally ill, such extreme measures to eliminate drugs could possibly push him over.

If implemented as described here, the means of eliminating illicit drugs from our lock-ups would be like "throwing the baby out with the bath water." It could possibly create more problems than benefits for society.

We must deal with the problem within the addict. By attending a controlled substance abuse program an addict can diminish his drug addictions. These programs are successful whether an addict enters them voluntarily or by coercion.

We are better educated about drug addictions than we were twenty years ago. We now know smoking cigarettes is addictive and can be deadly. Scott's addiction to tobacco killed him.

We are aware of the therapeutic steps an addict must take on the road to sobriety. We know to expect an addict's drug relapse as part of his recovery.

We are growing to believe that drug addiction is a serious disease, not a criminal act.

Harm Reduction/Risk Minimization

Substance abuse is our Nation's number one public health problem. This disease negatively effects not only the addicted individual, but also family members, communities and society at large.

The widespread misunderstanding of the nature of the illness leads to mishandling of the addicted individual, and to a lack of effectively dealing with the inherent safety and physical health risks associated with substance abuse.

Public awareness and education programs are crucial to help the residents of our county understand, cope and find solutions to these problems.

Relapse prevention, early assessment, intervention strategies, pain management, detox programs and new methods for preventing overdose deaths need to be developed, expanded and made readily available.

Although clean needle exchange programs are highly controversial, they have proven to not only cut the risk of HIV and Hepatitis C and the medical costs associated with it, but to actually begin the dialogue between counselors and addicts about opportunities for treatment and recovery.

Methadone maintenance clinics have also been demonstrated to be successful in stabilizing long-term heroin users, thereby deterring criminal activities associated with obtaining illegal drugs as well as saving taxpayer dollars that have wastefully been spent on incarceration.

San Diego County has the second highest overdose death rate from heroin in the State, next to San Francisco, so the need for these programs as well as other new medical approaches in our county is evident.

Physical and mental side effects of drug use, from Club drugs to cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine, create a need for more clinical care. The emotional scars on the addicted individual, families and friends created by the nightmare of drug abuse create a demand for more qualified treatment professionals and facilities for healing.

Gretchen

"Life cannot wait until the sciences may have explained the universe scientifically. We cannot put off living until we are ready. The most salient characteristic of life is its coerciveness: it is always urgent, 'here and now' without any possible postponement. Life is fired at us point blank.

Jose Ortega y Gasset

Britain:

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openly purchased and smoked in cafes.

According to the Observer, Housing Minister Lord Falconer, a close Blair ally, was to meet this week with Home Office Ministers John Denham and Bob Ainsworth to brainstorm on ideas for drug policy reform.

It appears the Blair government will be walking a tightrope on the drug issue, prodded forward by a growing array of law enforcement, scientific, academic, and now, parliamentary bodies, but held back by its oft-expressed fears of heading down the path to legalization. While the terrain of battle may have shifted in favor of significant reforms, it isn't over yet.

At least Rudy Giuliani's uninvited interjection of his own views on cannabis has been ignored. Giuliani, the former mayor of New York City who garnered mawkish accolades as "America's mayor" for doing his job in the wake of the September 11 attacks, traveled last week to Britain to accept an honorary knighthood.

Giuliani, whose harsh policies on cannabis led to New York accounting for almost 10% of all marijuana arrests in the US, criticized the Lambeth experiment, where police in the London borough do not arrest users but merely issue citations.

"I would encourage the police to arrest as many of them as possible," Giuliani told the BBC. "Marijuana causes a lot of the violence we've had," the balding ex-mayor asserted.

Giuliani's traveling companion, former New York City Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, chimed in to say that a notorious recent crime--the murders of a marijuana dealer and two of her guests above the Carnegie Deli in midtown Manhattan--was an example of cannabis-related violence. "It all has to do with marijuana — it's not a victimless crime."

Fortunately, British policymakers appear to understand the difference between drug violence and drug prohibition violence and are ignoring Giuliani and Kerik's suggestion.

"What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do."

John Rushin

The war on terror's newest target: U.S. children

by Arianna Huffington

The San Diego Union - Tribune, Feb 8, 2002

Did you know you are harboring terrorists in your furnished basement? To the terrible trio of Iran, Iraq and North Korea, we've now got to add millions of American kids. At least that's the cock and bull story the commander in chief is peddling with a slick new \$10 million ad campaign that is one of the most offensive displays of drug war propaganda ever. And that's saying something.

The TV spots, which for maximum impact premiered during the Super Bowl, promote the twisted reasoning that, since drug profits have found their way into the pockets of terrorists, any young Americans who use drugs are therefore guilty of aiding and abetting the enemy.

In one particularly odious ad, a series of fresh-faced young people are shown copping to a host of terrorist atrocities: "I helped kids learn how to kill," "I helped murder families in Colombia," "I helped blow up buildings."

Apparently, in *The World According to George W. Bush* and his drug czar, John Walters, the kid smoking a joint at a party is the moral equivalent of Osama bin Laden or Mohamed Atta.

In the single largest ad buy the federal government has ever made, the White House spent nearly \$3.5 million to get these commercials on the Super Bowl — \$3.5 million spent not on treatment but on demonizing America's young people. Our tax dollars at work.

And that's just a minute portion of the \$180 million a year the drug office spends on ads. But they've really upped the ante this time. It's one thing to drop an egg into a frying pan to demonstrate that drugs are bad for you, and quite another to link drug users to bloodthirsty murderers.

These ads make it seem like the next logical step in the war on terrorism is dropping Daisy Cutters on America's high schools and shipping teen-age drug users off to Guantanamo Bay. With 54 percent of high school seniors admitting they've used illicit drugs, it's going to get awfully crowded down in Cuba.

In addition to setting new standards for illogic, the ads are also exercises in highly selective finger-pointing. We know, for instance, that bin Laden and al-Qaeda used tens of millions of dollars in profits from the diamond industry to fund their operations. So how come we didn't see a commercial with a woman, say a senator's wife, fingering the diamonds on her sparkling tennis bracelet and admitting: "I helped kids learn how to kill"? And, given the fact that 15 out of the 19 hijackers — and most of the detainees in Cuba — came from Saudi Arabia, why no taxpayer-funded ad showing a soccer mom filling up her SUV and saying: "I helped blow up buildings"?

Simple. Linking diamonds or oil to terror doesn't fit the Bush agenda. Conflating the war on drugs with the war on terrorism does. These ads are nothing more than a lame-brained attempt to give the drug war a desperately needed makeover — turning it from a dismal, multibillion-dollar failure into a vital front in America's war against the Evil Ones. "Just Say No" repackaged as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

You can almost hear the wheels turning inside the heads of the White House spinmeisters: "The War on Drugs is a loser, but the War on Terror's got big-time legs. So all we've got to do is blend the two of them together and, bingo, no more pesky people asking if the \$20 billion a year we keep throwing at the drug war is worth it."

It's hardly a coincidence that just one day after the Super Bowl ads aired, the White House released a new foreign aid budget that escalates U.S. military assistance to Colombian troops battling drug traffickers.

At the end of the movie "Traffic," Michael Douglas' dispirited drug czar crystallizes the madness of the drug war: "If there is a war on drugs, then many of our family members are the enemy. And I don't know how you wage war on your own family."

Clearly, the Bush administration has no such misgivings.

A New PATH
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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.

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 rehabilitation 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.

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.

NEWSFLASH!

The PATH Reference Guide for services and assistance with drug treatment and drug addiction issues is now available. Contact the Path office at 619-670-1184 or Banewpath@aol.com to get your copy. It is only \$5.00. Our profound thanks to Christina Snyder for all of her hard work in compiling this important guide.

Attention P A T H 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 Banewpath@aol.com

Endorsed By

San Diego Psychiatric Society

Mental Health Association
in San Diego County

NAMI San Diego

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Society

Families to Amend
California's Three-Strikes