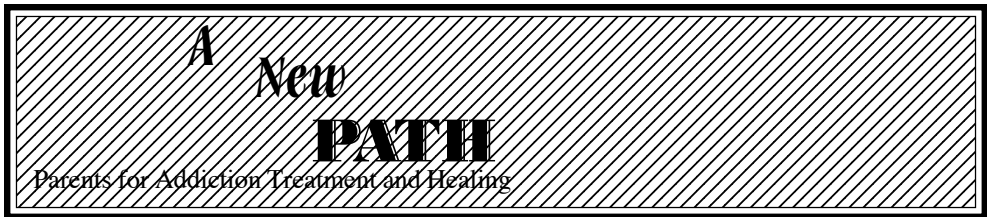


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Vol II June 2000

Co-Directors' Message

The White House says that there are five million serious drug users in the United States who need treatment, and studies by the Rand Corporation indicate that treatment is 10 times as cost effective as interdiction. So, why are we a society who locks up our addicted population, instead of treating them? And, why is there only room in treatment facilities for 43 percent of these addicts?

The U.S. Sentencing commission indicates that of the more than 20,000 federal drug defendants in 1998, only 41 were drug lords. In the War on Drugs, it seems apparent that it is time to focus our attention on demand reduction.

Our current laws have done very little in stemming drug crimes. Instead of catching the big-time dealers, we have been punishing and incarcerating the real victims--the addicts.

Focusing on demand reduction at home is the most effective way to undermine the Colombian drug markets. Military intervention cannot repeal the laws of supply and demand.

Let's look at this on a local level. In 1999 approximately 15,000 users were imprisoned in San Diego County for possession charges alone. Imagine the outcomes we could have by mandating them to treatment!

Our anti-drug sentencing is perverse, and it mocks justice when punishment is not uniformly tailored to fit the crime. We know that the imprisonment of over 84,000 federal drug prisoners is doing very little to solve America's drug problem, so there is no justification for resisting reform today.

We believe that it is time to change current policies and attitudes. We are not suggesting a soft-on-crime approach. We are proposing a reform of laws that will have a positive solution for our society. By mandating non-violent addicted offenders to treatment, we can make a real difference in the lives of the addicts, their families, and the community.

We still have much to do. Thank you for your continued support of our goals.

Co-Directors Gretchen Burns Bergman
and Sylvia Liwerant

PLEASE SAVE THIS DATE!

On Saturday, September 9, 2000 A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing) and the Mental Health Association in San Diego County (MHA) will present *It Takes a Community...*, an elegant evening event at the Emerald Wyndam Plaza Hotel.

The inaugural gala will feature a VIP reception in the Emerald Shapery Penthouse, beginning at 5:30 PM, with celebrities and special honored guests. Several community leaders will be honored for their contributions to reduce the stigma of addiction and mental illness.

A silent auction, dinner, entertainment and awards ceremony, held in the Crystal Ballroom will follow.

It Takes a Community... will benefit 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.

Ticket price: \$75 & \$100 (includes VIP reception) For more information, please contact:

Karen Luton (MHA), 619-543-0412 or
Gretchen Burns Bergman, 619-670-1184

EDITORIAL: Time for Change

We were raised to believe that the laws that govern us were set up for the greater good of the majority of our citizens. Somewhere along the line some of that has changed.

It is incredible to realize that today most families know someone who has been incarcerated in a detention facility. Perhaps he/she is an immediate family member, a friend, or a friend of a friend.

Few of us have been untouched by the prison growth of the past two decades. California now has the biggest prison system in the western industrialized world, and we are the most overcrowded system in the U.S.

The positive effect of our prison growth is that California's tough law enforcement has encouraged some hard core convicts to stop their criminal activities, or to move to states that are known to be soft on crime. Prison inmates have been seen using maps of the U.S. to track which states had some form of "three-strikes" legislation and which did not, in an attempt to avoid tough legislation.

The negative effect of this prison growth is that California has incarcerated a significant segment of our population who need substance abuse treatment in a therapeutic environment rather than a penitentiary.

Crimes of 85 percent of inmates are drug or alcohol related. Many of these people are young adults who are naive about the unwritten rules and regulations of the criminal subculture, just as they are victims of their own bad choices in life. They become potential victims of hard core convicts.

We see the current prison system acting as an incubator for organized crime. There is little recovery and rehabilitation, but there is violence, hatred and drug use behind bars.

Our society has been dealing with a disease of the brain (addiction) with ignorance and fear for too long. Punitive incarceration is not just ineffective, it is dangerous. When so many of our sons and daughters are being sentenced to learning the destructive laws of the prison social system, instead of struggling to treat a painful and devastating health problem, we must re-look at our approach.

Mandated (forced) treatment has been proven to work. It reduces costs to the taxpayer, leads to reduction in crime and recidivism, saves valuable lives and creates a safer community.

This November, California voters will have an opportunity to make a necessary policy change in the handling of non-violent drug offenders. The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act will divert low-level, non-violent drug possession offenders out of prisons and into drug treatment and other rehabilitation services, preserving needed prison space for the population it was originally intended for--violent criminals.

We believe that this is an opportunity for citizens to pass legislation that truly is in the best interest of the majority, and that represents the greater good for society.

Gretchen Burns Bergman is the Co-Director of PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing) and the parent of two sons who have the disease of heroin addiction.

David Beck Brown is an arts educator who has worked with convicts in county, state and federal detention facilities

(This article was originally published in The San Diego Union-Tribune on June 15, 2000.)

The Maze of the Criminal Justice System

David Beck Brown

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

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Waging the War on Addiction

By Christina Nilson Snyder, Recovering Addict

Thirty-one years ago the United States declared war on drugs. This war has cost billions of dollars without result. More Americans are addicted than ever before.

The quality of drugs has gone up, while the cost has gone down. Hundreds of thousands of addicts are in prison. The United States incarcerates more people per capita than any country in the world, and spends more money building prisons than schools. The average American male has one in eleven chances of going to prison in his lifetime.

Drug addiction is a disease that expresses itself in ways that are anti-social. An addict's disease isolates them from others except when drugs are involved. Hostile, resentful, self-centered and self-seeking, addicts cut themselves off from the outside world. Anything not completely familiar becomes alien and dangerous to the addict; their world shrinks and isolation becomes their life.

Addicts use drugs in order to survive. When their addiction is treated as a crime, they become rebellious and are driven deeper into isolation. One aspect of addiction is the inability to deal with life on life's terms. Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience are sharply affected by drug use. This chain of dysfunction is not broken until the addict receives treatment for their addiction.

The statement that drug addiction is a disease has provoked widespread discussion during recent years. It has been asserted, questioned, debated, denied and defended. On the whole, it has been accepted.

Most doctors currently in private practice in Addiction Medicine believe that a twelve-step program is the only hope for those who suffer from the disease of addiction.

Addicts can be recognized, diagnosed, and treated successfully. An addict can not be cured, but his illness can be arrested so successfully that he can lead a normal life without the use of drugs. All of this can take place provided he is recognized as an addict, and recognizes this fact himself.

It does not seem that warehousing addicts in prison without treatment is in the best interest of society or the addict. An addict should not be offered treatment simply to avoid incarceration, nor should they be excused from the crimes they are charged with. On the contrary, addicts should be mandated to treatment so the best interest of the addict and society may be served.

Most addicts commit crimes to support their drug habits, not because they have a high level of criminality. "Doing time" is the easiest part of a drug addict's life. What is difficult for the addict is participating in a program that forces them to develop the skills necessary to live a drug-free life.

See Waging War on page 5

Legislative Committee Update

By Ingrid Fermin, Legislative Committee Chairman

The initiative entitled California Campaign for New Drug Policies will be on the ballot in November 2000. It appears that the initiative attempts to accomplish many of the goals to which PATH members are dedicated (see enclosed Fact Sheet).

On May 10, 2000 PATH hosted a luncheon in order to encourage an open forum of discussion between representatives of the initiative and community leaders from San Diego.

Campaign Director Whitney Taylor and Co-author of the initiative, Attorney Clifford Gardner responded to a lively question and answer session, held at the recently opened Department of Corrections Family Foundations Facility. Many of the attendees had not had an opportunity to review the initiative prior to the luncheon; however, everyone agreed that the afternoon was very informative.

PATH Board Members are continuing to meet with civic leaders to gain information about the mechanics of the initiative and how it might impact various segments of the community.

The legislative committee is pleased to have the support of PATH members Nancy McCune and Jim Land. We are hopeful that our committee will become more politically active in the San Diego Community. Please contact me at (858) 720-0894 if you would like to join us!



ANew PATH
P.O. Box 3644 #264
Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067

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, all parents of offspring whose lives have been devastated by the disease of addiction.

Thank
You

Each month, at our PATH general meeting, 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 included:

Linda Hughes, Attorney, Law Offices of Public Defender

Dr. David Bergman, MDFAPA, Medical Director of Charter API Hospital

Timothy Tower, Superior Court Judge

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

Thank you to these people for sharing their expertise. We will continue to bring in guest speakers each month to serve the educational component 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 about the proper handling of addicts with this illness.

We meet the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at Charter API Hospital. However, we will be dark in July because of the Holiday. Our next meeting is August 1, 2000.



A New PATH is officially a non-profit organization. Many thanks to **Alan Azimi** for all his efforts in helping us to achieve this status.

..

Thank you to those organizations who have endorsed the goals and proposals of PATH:

- .. San Diego Psychiatric Society
- .. Mental Health Association in San Diego County
- .. Friends of San Diego Psychiatric Society
- .. San Diego Association for the Mentally Ill

A Big Welcome

to our new Board members:

Anna Cole, Secretary; **Grace Conlee**, PR; and **John Micetich**, Fundraising. Grace recently took us through a very valuable strategic planning workshop.

Co-Directors **Gretchen Burns Bergman** and **Sylvia Liwerant** have a terrific team with **Tom O'Donnell** as Assistant Director and Membership Chair, **Ingrid Fermin** as Legislative Chair, **Lee Covell** as Treasurer, **Christina and Larry Snyder** as Education and Treatment Chairs, **Nikou Hessami** as Archivist, and **Dan Holsenback** as Legal Advisor.

Waging War

Continued from page 3

Addicts enter programs of recovery in a hopeless state. Hopeless because they do not know how to end the cycle of active addiction. When a person in this seemingly hopeless state of mind is incarcerated, their problems are compounded. Anti-social behavior is a by-product of incarceration. Inmates are released from prison with less self-worth, more criminality, and more behavioral problems. With a recidivism rate of 65 percent, well over half will be returned to State Prison. However, statistics show that rate reduced to 15 percent after treatment.

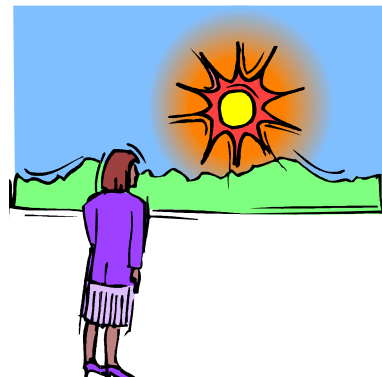
In spite of the enormity of the addict's problem, very little has generally been done to provide the addict with the assistance needed to solve his drug problem. Only a few addicts are fortunate enough to receive treatment while imprisoned.

Community programs are directed toward producing change in the behavior of an individual as he lives under natural conditions in the community. Included within the concept of community-based treatment is an idea of restoration and improvement rather than restriction or disablement.

Under these conditions the program staff is able to identify discrepancies between the person's ideals and his actual practices, direct him to address his discretionary decision making skills, and allow him to suffer the logical consequences of his actions.

To some, this may seem to be a "soft on crime" approach in meting out justice. I beg to differ. The most difficult thing addicts can do, perhaps in their life, is address their disease and patterns of behavior. For most, this might be the first time they have ever taken a look to see exactly what they are made of. In order to help addicts, and at the same time protect society from criminal behavior, we must help them do so within a tightly monitored, structured program of recovery.

In my experience, many recovering addicts become so passionate about their second chance at life that they end up working in recovery themselves.



Strangulation Tango

Please release me from this terrible dance of death.

Since childbirth, pain is a part of me,
and I forever wait for the pleasure that is surely my profit one day...
when growth comes to him,
or peaceful understanding comes to me.

The incomprehensible irony of choosing only
neon sparklers in a sea of gray...
instead of the vibrant and constant colors of life!

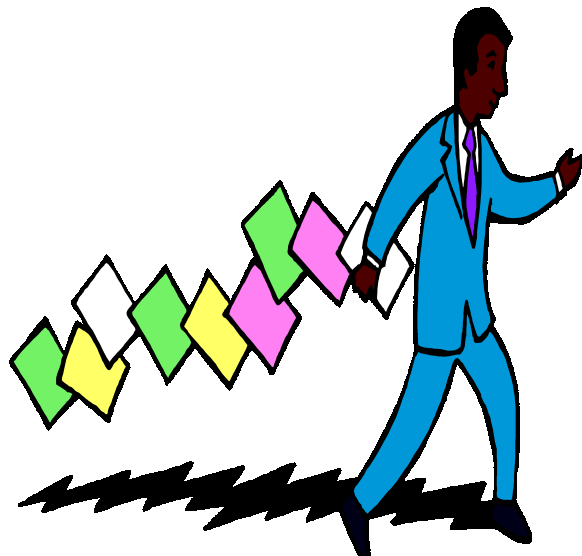
Forced to contemplate a truth of no tomorrow...
of an unfinished and unformed reality...
It claws at my chest and tears at my womb.

The senselessness of a wasted being is too bitter to bear.
All attempts to help are futile.
Yet...hope is imperative.

The solution is either cruelly elusive or nonexistent.

The dance goes on in a crazy maniacal rhythm,
bruising with each beat...
and, yet, holding my heart captive.

GB 3/25/97



In today's busy world, sometimes we only have a few moments to get our message out. Here is my elevator speech (the time it takes to go from the first to the top floor). I invite you to use mine, or to develop your own, and to seize any opportunity to tell others about our cause.

Who: A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing).

What: We are a non-profit organization of parents, concerned citizens and community leaders working together to mandate treatment for addicts who have been convicted of non-violent, drug-related crimes.

Why: Because punitive incarceration doesn't work, but treatment does.

Result: Our approach will save lives, heal families, reduce crime, and save taxpayer dollars.

Gretchen Burns Bergman