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A New PATH



Vol XXXIV July 2011

Postcard from the President by Caroline Stewart

Dear PATH friends and family,
OMG: another year has passed and our wonderful PATH is still standing tall in spite of the stormy economic seas. For those of you who were unable to attend, our Walk on Washington Street last Friday (June 17th) to support the cause of Moms United to End the War on Drugs was a huge success. In case you had forgotten, 40 years ago, Richard Nixon declared that the nation was going to war against drugs. Since that day, our prison population has increased from 40,000 non-violent drug offenders (1980) to the present day number of 500,000. Tragically, most of those incarcerated for drug crimes are people of color. Nothing gets my patriotic juices churning like a good old-fashioned sixties rally. It felt so refreshing to be making a much-needed public statement about the need to end the drug war. How proud I felt to join in union with my fellow San Diego friends who want justice for people unfairly incarcerated for addictive illness... We had one brave speaker at our event who shocked us with the story of her daughter's recent 70 year prison sentence for a non-violent "break and entry." I was particularly deeply moved by the stories of mothers whose children died of tragic over-doses complicated by a lack of a Good Samaritan Law: that one would not be prosecuted as an accessory for reporting a drug overdose to 911. Thank you to our ever-intrepid workaholic Exec, Gretchen Bergman, for recently testifying before a legislative committee in Sacramento about this important, much-needed law. Thank you everyone who helped to make this event the talk of the town. Thank you to all of the media who showed up en masse and who even arranged for helicopters to film our event to tell the San Diego community about our important mission... Thanks as well to our wonderful new PATH LA people who hosted a Moms United Event at Chucos in LA. Our own Julia Negron who heads up the LA PATH chapter and her crew worked tirelessly to get the word out. As far as I am concerned, Julia Negron is the QUEEN OF FACEBOOK! ... Finally, thanks so much to my cherished UCSD COD community and its tireless Program Director, Ami Roeschlein, MFT, who supported our cause. The Walk on Washington Street is now over but the Moms United campaign is just revving up. We moms will not stop until our children are receiving the clinical treatment they need and are released from jails and prisons with over-crowding that is horrifically reminiscent of medieval prisons. Please join A New PATH for our annual fashion show: Strut for Sobriety on September 10th. It promises to be a total blow-out affair... and finally; once again, I most heartily beseech you to help PATH stay alive by making a monetary contribution to support our mission. As with many non-profits during these tight financial times, PATH is financially destitute and barely able to keep the doors open. Please include us in your prayers, in your birthday wishes, as a way to honor someone's anniversary or to honor a beloved family member who has died. Whatever your contribution to our cause, we stand ready to assist you so keep us in the loop.

Your grateful President,
Caroline

Executive Director's Message by Gretchen Burns Bergman

40 Years

40 years ago on June 17, President Nixon declared a war on drugs. This war was lost from the start, because it didn't take into consideration the basic truths about drug use and addiction. It is essentially a war waged against our own families. After a trillion dollars wasted and countless lives damaged or destroyed, drugs are now cheaper, more potent and more easily accessible than ever before.

Insanity has been defined as attempting to do the same thing over and over in order to produce a new result. The battle strategies of the drug war have failed for decades, and instead promoted mass incarceration, unspeakable border violence, and tragic loss of lives from preventable overdose.

PATH's Moms United to End the War on Drugs campaign is a massive effort to stop the stigmatization and criminalization of people who use drugs or who are addicted to drugs. We are devoting much of this edition of our newsletter to sharing the poignant stories of Moms who are involved in this campaign. We now have partners across the nation, in New York, Texas, Oregon, Illinois, Michigan and several cities in California.

Join us as we grow in strength and numbers. Together we can end the irresponsible waste of dollars and resources, the unjust loss of liberties, and the tragic and unnecessary loss of lives. It's time to look honestly at the devastation and take a new approach based on harm reduction and health-oriented solutions, for the futures of all of our children.

momsunited
to end the war on drugs

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Gretchen Burns Bergman, Co-Founder & Exec. Dir.,

A New PATH, San Diego

Julia Negron, Regional Dir. Los Angeles Chapter of
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Yolande Cadore, Director, Strategic Partnerships Drug
Policy Alliance, New York, New York

Charmie Gholson, Dir. Michigan Moms United -
Editor, The Midwest Cultivator, Michigan

Visit Our New Moms United Campaign Website
Designed by Krista King - www.momsunited.net

1 or www.anewpathsite.org.

July 2011

PATH Welcomes Your Involvement!

PATH holds semi-annual educational speaker meetings and seminars. 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.

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 or PATH Ambassadors: 619-670-1184 or anewpath@cox.net.

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
Teen Drug Screen, Palmerado E.D., 858-694-8497
SD County Alcohol & Drug Service Info. & Referral:
619-692-5727

PARENT SURVIVAL KITS AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH WITH SPANISH TRANSLATIONS

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? We have created, a brochure of information to help parents navigate the criminal justice system. It includes information on when to intervene, warning signs of relapse, court related phone numbers, and the judicial process. If you would like a copy, please send \$1 for mailing.

PATH is endorsed by

- ▷ San Diego Psychiatric Society
- ▷ Mental Health America 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
- ▷ Drug Policy Alliance Network

Alternative News Sources

www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org

www.anewpathsite.org
www.jointogether.org
www.narconews.com
www.drcnet.org
www.reconsider.org
www.drugpolicy.org
www.sdchip.org
www.centerforce.org



Help us to Celebrate Recovery by ordering your PATH to Recovery magnetic "R" ribbons and placing them on your cars and refrigerators, or anywhere visible to help to reduce the stigma and show the world that you support Recovery from addictive illness.

They are Available through the PATH office for \$2 each or 3 for \$5.

A New PATH 2011 Committees

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

- Executive (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer)
- Finance and Fundraising
- Membership
- PR/Publicity
- Education & Recovery
- Legislative & Prison Reform

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

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 3600 people! Consider purchasing an ad for our October edition.

\$60 - business card \$125 - 1/4 page
\$250 - 1/2 page \$500 - full page

Our next printing deadline is **September 30, 2011**. Make checks payable to: A New PATH, 2527 Doubletree Road, Spring Valley, CA 91978. Phone/Fax: 619-670-1184, Email: anewpath@cox.net. Thanks for all of your support!

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

Gretchen Burns Bergman - Managing Editor
Kathy Rezaizy, Anthony Moreno - Editor

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Help A New PATH reduce Stigma and Celebrate Recovery!

In order to celebrate the "silver lining" of sobriety, and to show your support of loved ones in recovery, or your pride in your own recovery, we invite you to join us in wearing "PATH to RECOVERY" silver cause bracelets. Order them through the PATH office by emailing: anewpath@cox.net and we will mail them to you right away. Please purchase 3 for \$10, so that you can wear one and give the others to friends in recovery, or you can purchase one for \$5. Wear these bracelets so that others can appreciate the growing number of people taking pride in recovery!

You can help support A New PATH when you shop!

Please register your Ralphs club card online at

www.ralphs.com/ Using A New PATH and NPO # "90278" and every time you shop and swipe your card/ PATH will automatically earn a rebate.

You can also contribute to New PATH through Food 4 Less: www.food4less.net

Please call the PATH office if you need help in setting this up at: **619-670-1184**.
thank you for your ongoing support !

Mothers United to End the War on Drugs

www.momsunited.net

Mothers Day National Press Release – 4/29/11

Mother's Day Launch of New National Campaign: Moms United to End War on Drugs Moms Played Key Role in Ending Alcohol Prohibition and Now Working to End Failed Drug War Moms From California, Illinois, New York and Texas Available to Discuss Personal Experience with Drug War and Moms United Campaign Plans

Moms from around the country are using Mother's Day to announce the national launch of a campaign whose mission is to help end the disastrous drug war. Moms United to End the War on Drugs hopes to play a similar role as moms in the 1930's who led the successful fight to end Alcohol Prohibition.

Many of the moms leading this campaign have been personally impacted by the war on drugs, including having family who suffer from addiction, have been repeatedly incarcerated, or have died from preventable drug overdoses.

"My two sons have addictive illness, so our family has experienced not only the devastation of this life-threatening disease, but also the destruction of punitive policies and incarceration, said Gretchen Burns Bergman, a co-founder of Moms United to End the War on Drugs. "My older son spent a decade of his young life cycling through the criminal justice system for non-violent drug offenses and relapse. This was a tragic waste of human potential, a painful journey for the family, and a tremendous cost to the state. Mothers must speak out to change laws and to end the drug war that has been so damaging to our families and to the future of our children."

The Moms United campaign mission is to "end the violence, mass incarceration and overdose deaths that are a result of current punitive and discriminatory drug policies. We are building a movement to stop the stigmatization and criminalization of people who use drugs or who are addicted to drugs. We are urgently calling for health-oriented strategies and widespread drug policy reform in order to stop the irresponsible waste of dollars and resources, and the devastating loss of lives and liberty."

"My son was killed with a friend in a random crime committed by two juveniles involved in gang activity and illegal drug use. We all want safer communities, but the drug war has not made our communities safer, helped people with addiction, or saved lives," said Joy Strickland, CEO of Mothers Against Teen Violence. "The drug war has led to mass incarceration, gang violence, and an overdose epidemic. I am delighted to be part of a campaign focused on healing and ending forty years of a failed policy."

Moms United to End the War on Drugs will organize activities around the country over the next several months, including commemorations of the 40th Anniversary of President Nixon declaring the "War on Drugs" on June 17 and International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31.

Leaders of the Moms United campaign from around the country include Gretchen Burns Bergman (San Diego, CA), the mother of two sons who have struggled with heroin addiction and repeated incarceration; Denise Cullen (Palm Desert, CA), a social worker specializing in grief counseling, whose son died from an overdose two years ago; Kathie Kane-Willis (Chicago, IL), a researcher and professor, mother of a 13 year old daughter, founder of the Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy at Roosevelt University and a former heroin user; Joyce Rivera (New York, NY) who founded St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction in the Bronx and is the sister of an injection drug user who died of HIV/AIDS and Joy Strickland (Dallas, Texas), CEO of Mothers Against Teen Violence, whose son was killed by drug prohibition related violence.

Moms United to End the War on Drugs is a project of San Diego-based A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment and Healing), a 12-year old nonprofit organization that works to reduce the stigma associated with addictive illness through education and compassionate support, and to advocate for therapeutic rather than punitive drug policies.

A New PATH

Time to say no to War on Drugs

By Julia Negron – May 8, 2011 Los Angeles Daily News

IMAGINE a world without the scourge of our current punitive drug policies. Imagine a world where we mothers no longer wait teary eyed in prison visiting lines, where our daughters live to gift us with happy grandchildren.

Imagine our sons getting in trouble with drugs and getting saved because they are worth saving. Imagine borders where tourists bask in the sun without fear, and drug cartels' gunshots are replaced with lilting music. Imagine passionately wanting a better future for our children and grandchildren so that all humanity is treated with dignity and kindness. Imagine that billions in funding is funneled into education. Imagine that we stop fighting a war with ourselves.

It may seem odd for a mother to make a case for decriminalizing illegal drugs. But I can give you a grandmother's/drug counselor's/prison visiting mom's take on how we have turned on our own - how the "War on Drugs" has generated more victims than successes.

We turned on our own when we stopped helping people who need help; when we attacked the most marginalized of us; when we lost our compassion for the suffering; and when we handed over the treatment of our sick kids to men with badges, not stethoscopes. It happened when we stood silently while criminalizing a whole class of people. When we made smuggling and killing profitable. And, we pay for this by cutting education and programs that lift people out of poverty and vulnerability, guaranteeing that nothing changes.

In real-time there is little available to help the afflicted, so we lock them up out of sight and out of mind. In my world that means "prison churning." My own son developed drug dependence early -on and has now given years to a corrections system that can not "correct" him. His chances to make a better life for his children dim with each prison term. My life is better than my mother's, but my grandkid's/grandkids' lives will not be better than mine. The cost of the failed War on Drugs is more than just the \$40 billion we waste each year.

Think of the families torn apart by harsh prison sentences. How could we let this hopelessness happen to half a million children with a parent in prison!

As a nation we've spent billions year after year for 40 years trying to incarcerate our way out of a health issue. Gun boats and border patrols have been unsuccessful in keeping drugs out of this country, with the result that it just made them more costly. Harsh prison terms have handed us back a hollow-eyed generation of anti-social unemployable felons.

We've been encouraged to let our kids "hit bottom," and we've dutifully kicked our kids to the curb. Consequently we've buried a generation of overdosed kids who could not get it right, could not get past the stigma, could not find help, feared jail and found no rational agent of change. We tried to "just say no to drugs" yet today things are worse than ever.

Imagine that there are no more excuses and that there are solutions.

I am no different than you. Our tax dollars paid more than \$250,000 to incarcerate my non-violent drug offender son in California prisons so far. This waste must change. We can do this together. We have a way; we can start by reclassifying personal possession of small amounts of illegal drugs as misdemeanors. We can give our kids a chance to not be labeled a felon for life.

The group Moms United to End the War on Drugs has a simple mission: end the waste of the War on Drugs; end the failed policies; end the mass incarceration, the overdose deaths, and the border violence. Start by getting into action and join us in our solutions. Join us in protest on the 40th anniversary of this most damaging war - June 17 - and "just say NO" to the War on Drugs.

Julia Negron of North Hills is director of the Los Angeles regional chapter of A New PATH and a co-founder of Moms United.

Crack / Cocaine Sentencing June 2011

The U.S. Sentencing Commission voted to make retroactive last year's changes to the crack sentencing guidelines. As a result, an estimated 12,040 will be eligible to ask the court for reduced sentences. Average sentence reductions are expected to be 37 months. The crack sentencing guideline has been made retroactive.

The North County Times

FORUM: A Mother's Day plea to end drug war

By: Gretchen Burns Bergman - May 8, 2011

On June 13, 1971, I became a mother when my first son was born. Five days later, President Nixon declared the "war on drugs." Little did I know then that this war would be waged against families like mine for the next four decades.

On Mother's Day, I reflect on the joys and the challenges of motherhood, and I feel compelled to speak out against this silent but deadly war that has stealthily eaten away at the fabric of our lives. It has caused countless casualties, wasted taxpayer money, promoted discrimination against people of color, and taken away basic human liberties.

Employing fear-based, nonscientific dogma, this misguided war has robbed children of their futures, while building a massive prison-industrial complex. Grieving and angry mothers, tormented by needless loss, are speaking out to stop the violence, mass incarceration and overdose deaths.

Throughout history, mothers have come forward for the sake of their children to promote therapeutic and life-affirming policies. In the early '70s, I belonged to an organization called "Another Mother for Peace." In the 1930s, a group of mothers were instrumental in ending alcohol prohibition in the U.S. because they wanted to end the gangland violence and loss of lives caused by organized crime, fueled by Prohibition.

Moms can again be effective in calling for widespread drug policy reform, in order to stop the devastating loss of lives and liberty.

When my son was born, I realized that my most important role had just begun, and all my other passions and interests paled by comparison. Both of my sons were much adored, and we tried to give them every opportunity to ensure fabulous and fulfilling futures.

Unfortunately, both had addictive illness, which would have caused enough heartbreak and struggle, without the blundering roadblocks to recovery created by a criminal justice approach to what was essentially a health care problem. Besides dealing with the pain of lives interrupted by a life-threatening disorder, parents whose children are lost in the maze of addiction must also suffer humiliation, anger and stigma.

My older son spent a decade of his young life cycling through the criminal justice system for nonviolent drug offenses and relapse. This was a tragic waste of human potential, a painful journey for the family, and a tremendous cost to the state. I have several friends who have lost children to overdose, which could have been prevented if their children's friends hadn't been afraid of being arrested if they called the authorities.

With a Mama-bear mentality, I seek to alter what we know must be changed. I believe that we mothers are the silent majority. Far too many of us have experienced the devastation, but have been too stigmatized to speak out. To continue to pursue a war that has utterly failed and created so much damage is unconscionable. Mothers must speak out with courage and determination to promote policies of harm reduction and restoration for the sake of our children and the future of the next generation.

Gretchen Burns Bergman is the Co-Founder & Executive Director of PATH and Lead Organizer, Co-Founder of Moms United.

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What Mothers Day Means to Me

By Diane Goldstein | Mother and LEAP Speaker – May 9, 2011

You might not expect a mom and former police officer to advocate legalizing marijuana but that's just what I would like our elected officials to think about. On mother's day each year I reflect back on my obligation as a mom and what it means to me, my son and to our communities.

Thoreau stated "Aim above morality, be not simply good, be good for something."

As I have successfully launched my son into the world I realized that my obligation to him continues by making a better society for his future and for his children's future as well. I know that those that favor the current drug policy will view this as harmful, but as mothers helped end the devastation of alcohol prohibition, it is now time for mothers to end the drug war as well.

I spent 21 years in law enforcement supporting the goals of trying to achieve a "drug-free America." During my career I saw the damage of both legal and illicit drug abuse in our communities, but I also saw that the cost of this policy has caused more harm than good.

Our fiscal issues have clearly moved us to a position where we have to ask the question: is what we are doing effective? My experience tells me no. And although Proposition 19 lost this last election cycle, 47% of the electorate voted yes. This clearly shows that the time to honestly debate legalization of marijuana has come. Our founding fathers created a government that was based on freedom of religion, liberty and personal responsibility.

The dream of a "drug-free America" is unachievable in a free society based on this vision. Those calling for reform are no longer just hippies or other groups that have been marginalized in the past, but also such notable conservatives as Rand and Ron Paul, The Pew Center on States, and the conservative group called "Right on Crime" who believe we have over-criminalized our society resulting in an inefficient use of our fiscal resources.

Since the start of the drug war we have spent one trillion dollars. Our viewpoint on drugs has helped make the United States the world leader in the incarceration of its own citizens. This has caused the diversion of critical funding from other programs such as education, infrastructure, and job creation. Our leaders have failed to examine the risks and impact of our current national drug policy on the macro and the micro level. They fail to evaluate alternatives that include legalized regulation and decriminalization based on harm reduction strategies, despite studies that show that treatment reduces drug selling and is more cost-effective than enforcement.

Reports by the RAND Corporation and SAMHSA showed that treatment reduces drug selling and arrests for any crime. After one year, welfare declined while employment increased. Medical and mental health in-patient visits related to substance abuse decreased by more than one half. The RAND report analyzed enforcement "source control," "domestic law enforcement" and "interdiction" as compared to "treatment" to determine what was the best policy for controlling drugs.

The study demonstrated that "treatment is 7 times more cost-effective than domestic law enforcement effort, 10 times more effective than interdiction, and 23 times more effective than 'source control' methods." Yet we continue to under-fund treatment, devoting only half as many resources to it as we earmark for law enforcement, despite not only these reports, but also other reports through the years that validate the same results.

Instead we fund a \$50 billion a year war, not on enemy combatants, but on our families, our neighbors and our friends. It is time to shift the paradigm from a punitive model to a rehabilitative model where incarceration is the last tool, not the only one.

Diane Goldstein is a 21-year veteran of law enforcement and retired as a Lieutenant from the Redondo Beach Police Department, (CA). During her career she worked and managed a variety of tactical and investigative unit's including the department's Gang Enforcement Team (GET), The Special Investigations Unit (SIU), South Bay Platoon and the Crisis Negotiations Team (CNT).

He Joined A Gang, Began Selling Drugs & Was Shot at 13

By Keevy Wilkerson – Global Grind May 5, 2011

My father was working as a respiratory therapist in 1986 when a co-worker showed him a “cool, new way” to use cocaine. Since that time, he has been trapped in an endless cycle of drug abuse, recovery and relapse. His addiction to crack cocaine has had extreme consequences for our entire family. But despite what my family and I have endured, this Mothers Day holds special significance and promise for me.

As his drug use spiraled out of control, my father held up a convenience store, flashing an unloaded handgun. He was presecuted and imprisoned in 1993. As a daddy’s girl and the oldest child, I remember my father before addiction ruled his life. While my younger siblings’ earliest memories of him are tainted by his drug abuse, I knew the real man and the potential he possessed. To see him diminished as a father and driven to steal money and property from loved ones, was devastating to me. There was constant anger and outrage in my family over his behavior. I remember his incarceration as a particularly shameful period for my family.

I credit the unconditional love and forgiveness of my grandmother and mother as the reason I have not allowed anger to take up permanent residence in my heart. I have never sought to distance myself from my father, although there have been many times when, in shame, he has distance himself from the family.

We have lost my grandmother, mother, and my only brother. The incredible grief and loss suffered by my family have been made more complicated by my father’s addiction, which I believe is responsible for my brother’s death. I saw a major shift in his behavior following my father’s addiction. When his behavior got him kicked out of school, he joined a gang and began selling drugs. He was shot at 13, but survived. Drug trafficking landed my brother in juvenile detention first, and later in prison. After his release, my brother apparently saw no positive options for his life and was soon selling drugs again, which ultimately led to his death.

My father has received court ordered treatment and he has sought treatment voluntarily. Income based programs are limited in number, extremely understaffed, and under-funded. Although relapse is a natural and predictable part of recovery, this is usually grounds for expulsion. And limiting programs to 30 to 90-days is simply inadequate for effective rehabilitation. Even when he’s doing okay, the threat of relapse hangs over him like a dark cloud.

This Mothers Day holds special significance because Moms United to End the War on Drugs will launch a national movement led by mothers, many of whom have firsthand experiences with addiction or drug prohibition violence. As I remember my mother and grandmother and their insistence on unconditional love and forgiveness, I pray that Moms United will lead the way to policies reflecting a public health approach to addiction, so that people like my father can be viewed by our society as worthy of compassion and redemption.

Keevonya Wilkerson is Administrative Assistant for Mothers Against Teen Violence and lives in Dallas, Texas

My First Mothers Day

By Margaret Dooley-Sammuli-California Progress Report
May 8, 2011

My husband and I will welcome our first child at the end of this month. It’s a very exciting time – one filled with hopes for who our child will be and trepidation at what he will face in life. There are all the usual questions: will he be healthy? Will he be smart? Who will he grow up to be? And then there’s the concern that sometimes sneaks up on me when I least expect it: will he develop an alcohol or drug problem?

I’m not sure how many other moms-to-be have the same worry, but I doubt I’m alone. About 7.8 million Americans are in need of drug treatment, according to the 2009 U.S. National Survey of Drug Use and Health. And all of them belong to families – like mine.

My family is full of wonderful people. It just so happens that some of them have struggled with alcohol or drugs and with depression. In my parents’ and grandparents’ generations, it was alcohol. In my generation, family members have struggled with other drugs (both prescription and illicit) as much as with alcohol.

I have no doubt that my son will be a wonderful person, too –

whether or not he develops an alcohol or drug problem at some point in his life. I do have doubts, though, about whether he’ll be able to get the help he might need and be treated with the dignity that he will deserve.

Besides being my first, there’s something else noteworthy about this particular Mothers Day. It’s almost exactly four decades since President Nixon called drugs “public enemy number one” and ramped up the drug war that has made the U.S. the world’s top incarcerator. The U.S. now incarcerates about as many people for drug law violations as all of Western Europe locks up for everything.

At the same time, our country’s drug policy still fails to address our loved ones’ drug problems. Even under President Obama, funding for drug treatment is just a fraction of what it should be – and a tiny amount compared to what is spent on arrests, prosecution and incarceration. Preventable drug overdose is now the second-leading cause of accidental death in the US, after car accidents.

Just as I’ve worked hard during this pregnancy to get my baby off to a good start, I will do everything I can to keep him healthy and to give him the tools he’ll need to make good decisions. Despite how hard I’ll try, I know that I may not be able to prevent him from developing an alcohol or drug problem. But I just might be able to help change U.S. drug policies so that they stop emphasizing stigmatization and exclusion – and put health and dignity first.

That’s why I have joined with other mothers to end the war on drugs. Just as moms played a crucial role in ending alcohol Prohibition, we can do it again. Forty years after Nixon’s war on drugs, it’s time to say enough is enough. It’s time to end this destructive prohibition that has devastated too many families. We owe it to our very young and future children.

Margaret Dooley-Sammuli is a member of Moms United and is deputy state director in Southern California for the Drug Policy Alliance.

Mother’s Day wish: Prevent drug overdoses

By Denise Cullen – Desert Sun May 7, 2011

This is a difficult time for my family. There are several days like this one each year, days that should be happy ones but that I struggle with. Ever since my son, Jeff, died as a result of an overdose in 2008, this is one of those holidays that seem designed to remind me of what I’ve lost. But this particular Mother’s Day is different. This year, I’m channeling that pain into a call to action.

The drug war is a war on families. Hundreds of thousands of people are arrested each year for mere possession of a small amount of drugs for personal use. Many of them don’t have a drug problem. Some, like my son, do. Most are arrested, shamed and stigmatized. If they are convicted, they may also face the life-long barriers that accompany a felony conviction. Few receive any help.

Jeff was arrested several times, and he was offered treatment once. When he died, he was on a waiting list to enter court-ordered treatment.

Current drug policies seem to me to be almost entirely focused on judging, punishing and shaming people who use drugs. This approach to drug use is not just failing to address our loved ones’ drug problems, it’s making them worse.

My son was a wonderful person who also happened to have a drug problem, which was significantly complicated by his ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). Despite this, he was warm and caring. He played competitive pool with his father. He excelled at surfing, BMX bike riding and he was artistic. He was a loyal friend to so many. He loved his family and he was exceptionally compassionate. He was known for his smile and laugh, for making people feel special.

Jeff died of a preventable drug overdose — and he’s not alone. Preventable drug overdoses are now the second-leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., after car accidents. So where’s the public health campaign to address this problem? Where are the prevention efforts that could have helped keep my son alive?

Jeff’s drug problems seemed impossible for him to break. During the time he struggled with drugs — from 14 to 27, when he died — everything you could possibly try, we tried: individual therapy, group counseling, drug treatment (several times), bailing him out of jail, not bailing him out of jail. He wanted to stop, but he couldn’t. He was threatened with jail. That didn’t work. He went to jail. That didn’t work.

Denise Cullen is Executive Director of Broken No More & GRASP

Letter to the Editor: Mother's Day Is Not a Happy Day for All

By Linda Orozco | Published on 05.03.2011 Noozhawk – Santa Barbara

This Mother's Day, I will be reflecting on my journey as a mother, with gratitude for my four children but also with great sadness for mothers I know who have lost a young adult child. On Sept. 16, 1979, I gave birth to my third child, a son. I was excited because I wanted another son. He was adorable. I couldn't stop gazing at him in wonder. I had no idea then what the future had in store for my son.

I was raised in a very loving family. Some of my family members have struggled with mood disorders, but none of them had had a co-occurring drug problem. I had heard talk about the war on drugs, and I felt confident it could not affect me or any of my family members. I had no idea what horror awaited my family, or what the impact would be on my life.

As my son became a teenager, I noticed a change in his behavior. He had been a humorous, loving, caring child full of laughter and enthusiasm. He was very well liked and had many friends. He used to love to cook; he would tell everyone he would make something for each and every one, and said that he wanted to become a chef. But during his last years of high school, he couldn't do the things he once loved to do anymore. First his school work suffered, then I noticed he wasn't sleeping at night. He was sad because his father was no longer in his life. Sometimes he seemed anxious and agitated, even paranoid at times. He began to ask his sister and me whether we had called out his name when we hadn't. Then he started to self-medicate with alcohol and drugs. I thought, "What's happened to my son? He's hearing voices! This is not the son I knew!"

I tried reaching out for help, yet no one really knew where to direct me. I called agency after agency in town, but no one was able to help us. Several times I was given phone numbers that were no longer in service. As a single mom I was at wits end. One night when my son was raising his voice at me, I called 9-1-1 to see if an officer could talk with him. I was fortunate to have an officer respond to the call who talked with my son and advised me to just let my son go for a walk and cool down because once he got into "the system" he would never get out of it. He turned out to be right. If I knew then what I know now, I would have never called the police, because my son began to be considered a criminal instead of being treated as a young man who was suffering from a mental health disorder.

My son's mood swings got worse. He began to get very depressed and withdrawn, and sometimes frustrated and belligerent. Eventually one evening he got booked into jail. Unfortunately, when he was released his nightmare continued. He would walk the street all night long, hearing voices and talking to himself until his feet were covered with blisters, and he would tap on my window begging for food. He attempted suicide at 22 and was hospitalized briefly but released with no follow-up. He was caught in the "revolving door" — in and out of jail, a series of too-short hospitalizations and no real recovery.

Our country spends \$15 billion a year on the so-called "Drug War," but the funding for treating mental health disorders and dual diagnosis has been slashed. I found out the hard way that Santa Barbara has but a handful of residential treatment beds. Finally, after almost 10 years of this nightmare, my son had to be sent to one out of town to have any chance of recovery. Some of my friends' sons and daughters were not so lucky, however, and lost their lives to suicide and overdose. My heart goes out to their moms on this Mother's Day.

Linda Orozco is a member of Families ACT!

A Mother's Plea to End the War on Drugs

By Rita Lowenthal - May 09, 2011 Santa Monica Daily Press

Mother's Day just passed and I can't help recalling those times when my grown-up children were those adorable babies. I cherish those minutes that I held them high in the air and they made me laugh because they laughed — and my heart was so overflowing with love that it ached.

I had two perfect sons like that. The eldest came with built-in boundaries; he didn't think it was fun to run against a red light. My other son craved the excitement of taking chances; no staying in a playpen for him.

The oldest, now 57, is a careful, creative man who knows how to care for himself, those he loves, and the world. His younger brother died from heroin addiction at the age of 37.

My son's lifetime struggle with addiction began in the seventh grade in our nice suburban middle school. Like many others who longed to be cool, he experimented with drugs, happy that he could outsmart "dumb" laws and parents who just didn't get it. These kids still did well in school, and called home if they were going to be late, thinking that good grades and obeying basic parental rules would protect them. They didn't understand that experimenting with drugs is a choice, but addiction is not.

By the time Josh was 14 he had found heroin, and we were advised to get him out of town to a therapeutic milieu. In middle- and upper-class families, addictions were becoming common, and psychiatrists had few if any referrals to offer. We found a newly-established addiction center in Vermont that seemed like it could help him. He ran away from treatment, saying he wanted to be at home.

From then on his story is not unusual. He went from shooting hoops in the suburbs to shooting heroin in the ghetto. His journey took him from his bar mitzvah to the ultimate humiliation — incarceration at San Quentin for petty thievery. I think the judge got tired of him and tried to teach him a lesson without considering that prison is a place to learn more about crime, and that prisoners emerge with their self-image and possibilities for employability destroyed.

Josh spent 24 years in and out of rehab facilities and jails, experiencing alternating torment and hope. Throughout his nightmare he maintained strong ties with our family, and with many of his friends, all of us waiting for a drug-free Josh to appear. When he was in recovery, we gathered new strengths.

Finally, the disease left him exhausted and hopeless, and like many people, he turned to self-medication. At 37, while clean and sober, he reached for the only thing he could think of that gave him pleasure and relief: more heroin. He saw no other way out.

Josh's journey taught me that criminalization is not the answer to addiction. It doesn't prevent drug use, and it is not cost-effective. The war on drugs is a losing solution for both addicts and for society. Criminalization only adds to the profits and precipitates the atrocities of the international traders. The dollars spent on non-violent offenders in the criminal justice system could be much more effective if used for addiction research and treatment in the public health system. Addiction is a disease, and should be treated with dignity.

It's the 21st century and we now understand that most mental illness starts with a chemical imbalance, and that people do not contract leprosy by committing sins. I believe that medical advances will soon be able to help people manage addictions. That day will come sooner with resources directed toward treatment, rather than criminalization.

Arthur Schopenhauer understood this phenomena when he said, "All truth passes through three stages: First it is ridiculed. Second it is violently opposed. Third it is accepted as being self evident."

Let's hope we are nearing the third stage.

Rita Lowenthal is the author of "One Way Ticket: Our Son's Addiction to Heroin," and a member PATH. The Moms United to End the War on Drugs national campaign is a project of A New PATH

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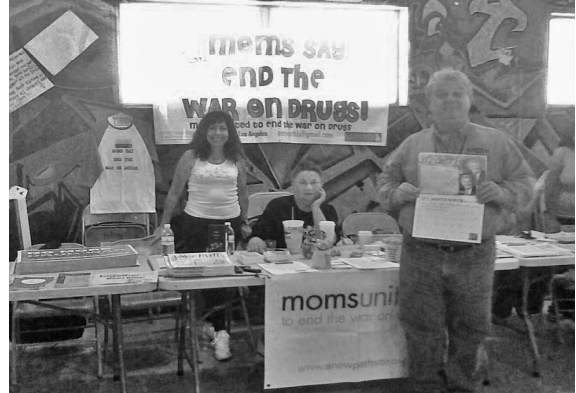
The 40th Anniversary of Nixon's Declaration of a "War on Drugs"

June 17, 2011 marked forty years since President Richard Nixon, citing drug abuse as "public enemy No. 1", officially declared a "war on drugs." A trillion dollars and millions of ruined lives later, the war on drugs remains an abject failure. Drug policy reform advocates all across the country held a day of action to raise awareness about the failure of drug prohibition and call for an exit strategy to the failed war on drugs. Events were held in 15 states, and in major cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco and New Orleans.

PATH gathered community partners in San Diego County for a Mothers United to End the War on Drugs rally at Pioneer Park & Walk on Washington (Street), demanding an end to the violence, mass incarceration and overdose deaths that are a result of current punitive policies. PATH community partners included UAAMAC, All of Us or None, FACTS SD, Broken No More, Canvass for A Cause, LEAP, NAMI, SD Cannabis Policy Reform, ASA, SSDP, Stepping Stone, Drug Policy Alliance, etc. The evening included media interviews, a rally, walk, circle of promises and candlelight vigil.



A New PATH (San Diego & LA) held events to Declare That After 40 Years of Failed Drug Policy, It is Time to Follow A New PATH...



In Los Angeles on June 18, A New PATH LA collaborated with Students for Sensible Drug Policy and other criminal justice organizations for a Day of Action to call for Community Solutions to end the 40 year war on drugs and mass incarceration. PATH LA joined forces with students, neighborhood youth and 20 other activist/advocacy groups at Chuco's Justice Center in Inglewood to "educate, empower and entertain" - to bring awareness to the mass incarceration resulting from punitive drug policies, the resulting racial discrimination and preventable overdose deaths that have been the result of this country's failed War on Drugs.

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Portugal Celebrates 10 Year Anniversary of Decriminalizing Drugs - By Tony Newman – Huffington Post – July 6, 2011

Everyone knows that the war on drugs is a failure. Despite more than \$40 billion spent every year on the U.S. drug war and 500,000 people behind bars on drug related offenses, drugs are as available as ever. But what is the alternative? What would happen if a society decided to treat drug use as a health issue instead of a criminal justice issue? What if we stopped the futile effort of using force to decrease drug consumption? What if we decriminalized drugs, not just marijuana, but all drugs like heroin, cocaine and meth? We've heard the horror scenarios that opponents of drug policy reform recite: more addiction, more broken families and a crazy escalation of crime and violence.

On the other side, advocates for decriminalization or legal regulation say that we would be better off not criminalizing what's a health issue. They advocate for education, prevention and treatment instead of jail for drug abuse and leaving in peace those whose drug use does not cause harm to others.

So who's right? You might be surprised to hear that this isn't just about hypotheticals anymore. Portugal decriminalized all drugs 10 years ago and the results are in: decreased youth drug use, falling overdose and HIV/AIDS rates, less crime, reduced criminal justice expenditures, greater access to drug treatment, and safer and healthier communities.

July 1st was the 10th anniversary of Portugal decriminalizing drug use. In 2001, Portugal decriminalized the possession of small amounts of all illicit substances. Having small amounts of drugs is no longer a criminal offense. It's still against the rules; it just won't get you thrown in jail or prison. It's a civil offense -- like a ticket. Portugal continues to punish sales and trafficking of illicit substances.

In Portugal's thoroughly re-envisioned drug policy, police officers now issue citations -- but do not arrest -- persons found in possession of small amounts of illicit substances. People who receive these citations are ordered to appear at a "dissuasion commission," an administrative panel that operates outside of the criminal justice system. The panel, with two health practitioners and one legal practitioner, examines the individual's circumstances and determines whether to make treatment referrals, issue fines or impose other non-criminal penalties. Decriminalization in Portugal actually helped reduce the stigma around drug use (without increasing it) and made drug use less politically difficult to talk about. It encouraged better collaboration between law enforcement and service providers, and allowed law enforcement to focus on large-scale traffickers, resulting in increased seizures of commercial quantities of illicit drugs.

The U.S. Drug Czar knows about Portugal's policy, but don't expect him to acknowledge their success. Instead we continue to wage our unwinnable war. June 17th marked the 40-year anniversary of the U.S. war on drugs, a punitive criminal justice approach to drugs that has cost taxpayers more than a trillion dollars, transformed the U.S. into the largest incarcerator in the world, failed to significantly reduce drug use, led to hundreds of thousands of overdose fatalities and HIV/AIDS transmissions, and created shocking racial disparities that exceed those of South Africa at the height of Apartheid.

Our 40 year war on drugs is proof of failure. Portugal is an example of an alternative. It is time for an exit strategy from our longest, costliest war!

Tony Newman is the director of media relations at the Drug Policy Alliance

LATimes: No Evidence "Reduced Incarceration" Will Lead To More Crime. APA Headlines – May 2011

The Los Angeles Times (5/27) editorializes, "As some commentators...would have it, it's time for Californians to lock their doors and bar their windows, because the court's majority this week upheld a federal court order for the Golden State to shed more than 30,000 inmates from its prison population within two years." Yet "little notice was paid to the fact that California has already taken important steps to reduce its prison population, and they didn't result in pandemonium in the streets." That suggests that "there's not an automatic connection between reduced incarceration and increased crime."

Gerson: California Officials To Blame For Court Ruling On Prison System. In the Washington Post (5/27), Michael Gerson expresses agreement with a Supreme Court decision on California prisons. Gerson says that "the state of California has failed to run a humane prison system," and adds that "an incorrigibly irresponsible state legislature...was an engraved invitation to judicial activism." While "court conservatives raised a number of practical concerns" they should not "distract attention from the true offenders in this case. California politicians have been complicit in the erosion of their own authority."

A New PATH

The War on Drugs 40 Years Later – Punitive Drug Policies Don't Work - The Santa Barbara Independent

By Suzanne Riordan - June 14, 2011

After struggling side-by-side for nine agonizing years with my son, Ian, as he dealt with depression, self-mutilation, drug use, and repeated incarceration for simply self-medicating, I saw him begin to find inner strength, confidence, and stability despite the feeling that he was being hounded by probation. Three months into this period of growing self-esteem, however, he had one "dirty test" and decided that all was lost, that this time he would be sent to state prison—a threat that is held over the heads of the thousands who go through our court system for using drugs. He ended his life that day, at the tender age of 23.

After a period of intense grief, and the deaths of a dozen other young adults under similar circumstances that winter in Santa Barbara, several of us moms came together. Certain questions were preying on our minds.

How do people who are essentially only harming themselves come to be treated as criminals? If our correction system was one time designed to rehabilitate, how have we drifted so far afield from this ideal? Where are the treatment centers, the rehabs, the hospitals? Where is the help for someone who is struggling with anxiety, depression, or more serious thought disorders, and is self-medicating? Forty years ago this week, President Nixon declared a "War on Drugs." Apparently, we've lost this war, despite the fact that it is costing us \$51 billion dollars a year. Apparently the drug war hasn't been able to stem the flow of drugs into our communities. On the contrary.

In 1980—a year before my son was born—there were 50,000 people incarcerated in the U.S. for drug law violations. Today there are 500,000. This number does not include the thousands and thousands being held on probation or parole violations such as dirty urine tests, or offenses committed under the influence of drugs. Thirty thousand people are in prison in California for a drug offense; two-thirds of them merely for a possession offense. Apparently, incarcerating people who use drugs does not get them to stop using. The latest recidivism rate cited for the Santa Barbara County Jail—where almost of our inmates have a drug or alcohol problem—is 85%.

The "War on Drugs" doesn't seem to have reduced the number of overdose deaths either. Twenty-six thousand people died of a drug overdose in the U.S. in 2006. Between 2008 and 2009, Santa Barbara County saw a three-fold increase in drug- and alcohol-related deaths. The shame connected with an overdose death—be it that of a 35-year-old Latino father or a white, upper-middle-class "bipolar" youth—tends to hide it from view, especially in a town like Santa Barbara that likes to look good to tourists.

"Public safety" is the mantra, the refrain, the chorus that you hear over and over and over ad nauseum in the halls of government. I heard it used at least 25 times this week at the county budget hearings. If we send a helicopter to hover over the home of an anxiety-ridden Santa Barbara man who is self-medicating, along with a SWAT team on the ground to break down his 80-year-old mother's door—do you feel safer? I don't. I feel worried. I wonder who is paying for this and who will be next? As far as I'm concerned, public safety requires treatment. We need to provide treatment options that are compassionate and effective for people who are experiencing enough distress to become addicted to drugs.

If the "war on drugs" hasn't curbed the use of "illicit" drugs (on the contrary), and hasn't reduced the number of overdose deaths (on the contrary), and has only succeeded in providing an excuse for search and seizure of hundreds of thousands of people (in particular those on probation or parole); and if this state of affairs is supporting vast industries and tempting communities to abdicate their responsibilities to private prison corporations, why are we tolerating it?

Why don't we redirect these resources to helping to prevent and heal the most fragile members of our society? ...

Suzanne Riordan is the Executive Director of Families ACT!, a local nonprofit organization advocating for alternatives to incarceration for people with mental health and substance use disorders.

Life on the Razor: Why I am Joining Moms United to End the War on Drugs

By Caroline Ridout Stewart, LCSW - May 19, 2011

I have to admit that I never bargained for being the mother of a heroin addict. Not me; I was the proverbial goody two-shoes. My own mother did not even have to ask me to do my homework. To the contrary, she used to come up to my room in the wee hours of the morning and beg me to stop studying and to go to bed. My parents set few limits with me because I was hard-wired to set my own. I am not bragging when I tell you that I have never even received a speeding ticket. I am in no way morally superior to anyone. I am, rather, sadly filled with terror of getting in trouble, any kind of trouble. Alas, my own beloved son is not wired like this at all. He has been using a full spectrum of street drugs since around the age of 14 and there is not a single day when his life is not filled with some tragic component of trouble. Clearly he and I are not copacetic.

My son arrived in my life after nearly thirteen years of horrific infertility. He was the poster-child for The BADLY NEEDED AND WANTED CHILD. My friends have heard me say that I was so desperate to be a mother that I would have gladly mothered a monkey. Alas, adopting my son as a newborn saved my life. It was the happiest day of my life. Thinking back to the day we drove him home from the hospital I am reminded of the Ikia Sale ad in which a woman is running towards a waiting car, her arms filled with Ikia treasures, and she is yelling at her husband "start the car, Fred, start the car." The point of the ad is that she felt as if she had robbed Ikia and was making a getaway. That is exactly how I felt the day we brought my son home from the hospital. I was terrified that someone would come to our door and tell us that it was all a big mistake and that they were taking the baby back. Thank God that did not happen. He remains my son and I continue to adore him despite his addictive illness.

It is ironic that I am writing this piece today as my son is scheduled to enter another long-term rehab this morning in order to ward off the ever-present threat of a return to jail for a probation violation. He is facing a two-year period of incarceration today if he is unable to prove to the judge that he has been admitted to a residential program. His original breach of the law was to attempt to bring a small quantity of Xanax (enough only for personal use) into San Diego from Tia Juana, Mexico. My son is tragically learning disabled and frankly lacks the wiles to be a hard-core criminal. But wait a minute folks; does anyone appreciate how difficult it is to even get into a day-treatment

COD program not to mention a program with more residential over-sight? I am told that people often wait several months to get into the program my son is attempting to enter. My son's prefrontal cortex has no capacity to plan for several months. He is a one-day-at-a-time type of guy. He is at high risk of giving up and re-embracing his addictive illness if hope lies beyond his mental reach. My family and I are one of the lucky ones. We have worked in the deep trenches of addictive illness for so many years that kindly social workers take pity on us. We are praying today that he does not go to jail. Please join our mother's brigade to put an end to the shameless war on drugs. It is killing our children!

AlterNet Mothers Day Plea to End the War on Drugs

By Joy Strickland, May 6, 2011

As a mother, I have had a close encounter with prohibition violence. My son was killed with a friend in a random crime committed by two juveniles involved in gang activity and illegal drug use. Holidays are a constant challenge

after a loss, and Mother's Day can be especially difficult after the loss of a child. But this Mother's Day holds special promise.

During our first fourteen years, Mothers Against Teen Violence worked valiantly, implementing school-based prevention and mentoring programs. But an NPR interview with Judge James P. Gray of Orange County, California three years ago, convinced me that MATV should be actively engaged in ending the drug war. Subsequently, we began the process of rebranding our organization, developing a three point plan for drug policy reform.

The first tenet of our plan is effective prevention targeting children and teens. Our youth need age appropriate information based on science so that they can make good choices about drugs; and they need parents that model responsible use of recreational and prescription drugs.

Secondly, we believe that a public health approach to drug use and addiction is preferable to punitive measures. Understanding that drug trafficking is a supply and demand problem, all drug policies should be re-evaluated to determine the impact on the supply or demand for drugs. That said, our best hope at reducing demand is to help people resolve the underlying issues that cause them to abuse drugs. Addiction is a disease, not a moral failure. Many drug abusers have suffered sexual abuse or other trauma. When we punish people for their addiction, often we are punishing them for being victims. Rehabilitation on demand is not only compassionate and cost effective, compared to incarceration, but also improves public safety.

And finally, we believe the time has come to end the racial disparity and encroachment on civil liberties that have been the hallmark of the drug war. All races use illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates. In fact, young white males are more likely to use and sell drugs than any other segment of the population. However, 74% of those incarcerated for drug related crimes are African Americans even though they make up only 13% of the population.

This Mother's Day is special because—as an act of courage, commitment, and love—moms across America will launch a new national campaign aimed at ending the drug war. Moms United to End the War on Drugs will follow the model fashioned by moms in the 1930's who led the successful fight to end Alcohol Prohibition.

We all want safer communities, but the drug war has not made our communities safer, helped people with addiction, or saved lives. Like Alcohol Prohibition, the drug war has led to gang violence and an overdose epidemic. Thanks to the drug war, America is the home of the largest prison system in world history. I am delighted to be part of a campaign focused on healing and ending forty years of a failed policy.

Joy Strickland is CEO of Mothers Against Teen Violence, Inc.

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Mission Statement

To reduce the stigma associated with addictive illness through education and compassionate support and to advocate for therapeutic rather than punitive drug policies.

WHO WE ARE

A non-profit advocacy organization of parents, concerned citizens, individuals in recovery, healthcare professionals and community leaders working together to educate the public, media and decision makers about the true nature of addiction, and to expand access to treatment services. We advocate to end discriminatory drug policies that serve as roadblocks to recovery.

Our goal is to reduce prison recidivism, save lives, heal families, and move towards 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 e-mail 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:

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San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts
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Our Proposals for Therapeutic Justice

- 1) Long-term mandatory rehabilitation in a structured therapeutic community-based recovery environment for non-violent drug 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 structured recovery homes, individuals with substance-related disorders should be mandated to transitional programs such as sober living environments, to prepare them to re enter society.



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