

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

Mailed November 16, 1987

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio - A Substance Abuse Prevention Program that will be guided by a professional counselor and trained students is getting under way at Youngstown State University.

It has been funded by a grant of more than \$90,000 from the U.S. Department of Education and will be under the guidance of Dr. George E. Letchworth of Canfield, director of Counseling and Health Services at YSU.

The purpose of the program is to conduct an assessment/survey of YSU students to determine their attitudes and behavior concerning alcohol and drug use, and to offer positive alternatives through wellness programs. It will also include a group of trained referral and support students and faculty, with community groups participating in this phase.

The first part of the Substance Abuse Prevention Program will be an annual survey, starting this month, of 1,000 YSU students regarding their attitudes toward drugs and alcohol.

Part two is the addition of counselor Jain Savage to the full-time staff as the program leader who will train and supervise 10 carefully selected student counselors, and also to assist in the counseling and referral on campus as well as working with local agencies.

"Holistic Health," the third component, is designed to offer alternatives to substance abuse and to emphasize the importance of wellness life styles.

The final part of the program will involve the training of additional interested students, faculty and staff on how to make an effective referral.

MORE

ADD ONE

According to Dr. Letchworth, the keystone of the program will be the recruitment and training of 10 peer counselors who will be selected students working under Ms. Savage. They will be responsible for presenting a variety of programs to student groups in order to promote the responsible consumption of legal drugs such as alcohol.

This peer group will be recruited, trained, supervised and evaluated by Ms. Savage who will, in turn, work with Dr. Letchworth and Dr. James Esperon who wrote the proposal. She will be assisted by a Substance Abuse Advisory Board which will be composed of interested faculty, community members and a representative of YSU Student Services.

Ms. Savage, a Youngstown resident, holds both a bachelor's degree in Education and a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling from YSU, where she was a graduate assistant.

Since 1982 she has been a certified addiction counselor with the Mahoning County Alcoholism Services. She has also worked at the Alcoholic Clinic of Youngstown and is a licensed professional counselor and a national certified counselor.

Dr. Esperon's YSU proposal was one of 500 submitted nationally to the U.S. Department of Education, and was one out of only 92 which was granted funding.

Dr. Esperon, a Canfield resident, has been a member in YSU's Counseling and Health Services Department since 1985 and opened a private practice in Canfield in October. He is a licensed psychologist and received his bachelor's degree in Economics, and his master's and doctoral degrees in

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Counseling from Syracuse University. He also served as counselor and counselor-in-residence at Syracuse University.

According to Dr. Esperon, the need for such a program has been documented by Dr. Pietro Pascale, professor of YSU's Foundations of Education, who surveyed the drug attitudes of 8,000 Northeastern Ohio area high school students four times over a 10-year period.

The last of his surveys in 1986 reported the highest percentage of usage in 10 of 14 drug categories since 1977. Although there was an increase in the perceived harmfulness of drugs such as marijuana, alcohol, cigarettes and inhalants, there had been no decrease in usage.

Since YSU draws 85 percent of its students from the researched counties of Mahoning, Trumbull and Columbiana, Dr. Letchworth said he considers it important that a preventative program in substance abuse be initiated on this campus.

"I suspect that there is a lot of hidden usage," Dr. Letchworth said. "Alcohol is the drug of this campus. We know students use drugs, we just don't know to what extent."

Dr. Esperon has begun work on the immediate goal of the YSU program, to survey 800 students, and to continue the survey on an annual basis. The study will also track 400 students for three years to gauge the impact of the program.

Dr. Letchworth said he expects a student organization, the Substance Abuse Awareness and Support Group, to be very helpful in making the program a success.

ADD THREE

SAASG was formed last spring by students and provides support for recovering chemically dependent students. Group members took part in recent activities on campus during National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week, in which a number of community agencies also participated.

The Substance Abuse Prevention Program is being directed by Dr. Letchworth, a licensed psychologist who has 27 years of administrative, teaching and counseling experience. He has been at YSU since 1968. He has also served on the Board of Trustees of Parkview Counseling Center and has been involved in drug abuse programs at that agency and others throughout the Youngstown area.

His staff at the YSU Counseling and Health Services Office includes four full-time psychologists, a counselor and four registered nurses, plus Ms. Savage, the new substance abuse counselor.

Ms. Savage taught in Struthers schools and Youngstown parochial schools before returning to YSU for her master's degree.

She is a member of the Ohio and American Associations for Counseling and Development, Northeastern Ohio Counselors Association, Kappa Delta Pi education honor society and Chi Sigma Iota counseling honor society.

By Erika Hanzely - YSU News Service

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NEWS SERVICE - EH

87-150

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Members of the Mahoning County Bench will don judicial robes to join the formal academic procession which will open the Bicentennial Constitution Convocation at Powers Auditorium at 8 p.m. on Tuesday evening, Nov. 17.

Mahoning County judges will form a special section of the academic procession, which will include YSU faculty, administrators and students in academic robe and regalia. It is expected that the procession will include more than 200 persons.

Participation by the Mahoning County judiciary has been coordinated by Judge Peter C. Economus and Judge William G. Houser of the Mahoning County Court of Common Pleas.

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