

# Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Digital Library Collections

---

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

---

**Collection:** First Lady, Office of the: Press Office: Records,  
1981-1989

**Folder Title:** Drug Editorial (Old)

**Box:** OA 18745

---

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Inventories, visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: **reagan.library@nara.gov**

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

*Last Updated: 08/29/2025*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Mrs. Reagan:

We have updated your guest editorial. Will you please make any changes and return to me?

Thank you.

Elaine

O.K.  
U.N.

4/7/87

## HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Guest Editorial About Drug Abuse and Young People  
by Nancy Reagan

The use of drugs by young people is one of the most serious problems the world faces today. Drugs are destroying the minds and bodies of our children and unless we can change the situation, we are in danger of losing part of an entire generation.

Drug abuse is one of our most democratic problems. It has invaded all segments of society, crossing all lines of race, ethnic background, religion and economics. It exists in wealthy suburbs, ghettos, cities, small towns, and isolated rural communities.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and, most importantly, to get them involved -- and thereby make them more knowledgeable.

Over the past <sup>6</sup>~~several~~ years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles both in this country and abroad visiting drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs and talking with as many young people as possible. What I have seen and the stories I have heard are enough to make the strongest hearts break. From Spokane, Washington, to Medford, New Jersey -- from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Rome, Italy, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned

## HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Guest Editorial About Drug Abuse and Young People  
by Nancy Reagan

The use of drugs by young people is one of the most serious problems the world faces today. Drugs are destroying the minds and bodies of our children and unless we can change the situation, we are in danger of losing part of an entire generation.

Drug abuse is one of our most democratic problems. It has invaded all segments of society, crossing all lines of race, ethnic background, religion and economics. It exists in wealthy suburbs, ghettos, cities, small towns, and isolated rural communities.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and, most importantly, to get them involved -- and thereby make them more knowledgeable.

Over the past six years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles both in this country and abroad visiting drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs and talking with as many young people as possible. What I have seen and the stories I have heard are enough to make the strongest hearts break. From Spokane, Washington, to Medford, New Jersey -- from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Rome, Italy, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned



them on and what their lives had been like. I heard how they had lied, cheated, stolen and fought for drugs. Some had run away from home and overdosed on whatever they could buy, beg, or steal -- pot, PCP, cocaine, uppers and downers, hashish, heroin, even insecticides. Often these drugs were mixed with alcohol -- a deadly combination -- but these children were too high to know or care.

Most of the children had begun their drug experiences with feelings of low self-esteem. Many began using drugs out of desperation for attention and love. But the deeper they descended into drug abuse, the more worthless and unloved they felt.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same -- that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

Time and again, and in many languages, former drug users have told me they were finally able to stop because they had the support of their families. I am convinced that the ultimate prevention of drug abuse by young people goes hand in hand with strengthening the family. A strong family unit with solid values can do a lot to prevent kids from getting involved with drugs in the first place by offering them the guidance, love and support every child needs to lead a happy, healthy life. It must be admitted, however, that many children turned to drugs even though they had the support and love of their families.

The importance of parental involvement becomes even more critical when you consider the young age at which children are being offered drugs. I remember one of my first visits to an elementary school when I sat in on a drug prevention class for third graders. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults have not even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a threat that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them and encouraging because we are now fighting back.

There are signs that progress is being made. The 1986 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that one in twenty-five seniors use marijuana on a daily basis while one in twenty use alcohol nearly daily. While these numbers remain unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late '70s. Daily use of marijuana has diminished to nearly one-third of what it was then, and the daily use of alcohol has declined steadily, albeit modestly. Our progress is encouraging, yet the numbers make it clear that this is not a battle which can be won overnight. New threats, such as that posed by cocaine, will continue to arise. We cannot afford to let down our guard.

Our top priority is prevention -- through education. Children, parents, teachers and the general public need to become more knowledgeable about the problem. The greater knowledge we have, the better our chances of dealing effectively with the problem.

Over the past several years, I have worked closely with the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth (NFP), the Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) and other parent organizations. These groups are leading the way in educating parents, children, communities, service organizations and others about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are assisting local parent groups in every state. In the past five years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. They are working effectively within their communities to combat school-age drug abuse and are taking their concerns to their state legislatures. Partly as a result of parents' efforts, many states have passed laws against the sale of drug paraphernalia and have enacted legislation to raise the legal drinking age to 21. Parents are proving that something can be done and that the time is past for excuses and denials.

I am very encouraged also by a growing movement led by young people themselves. Kids are standing up against peer pressure, a major cause that lures youngsters to try drugs. I am talking about positive peer groups made up of students who make a point of not using drugs. These groups are very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. The "Just Say No" clubs that are forming in schools and communities all across this country and throughout the world are wonderful examples of kids helping kids.

Sports celebrities and entertainers are getting involved in the fight against drugs too. Many sports heroes visit schools

regularly to talk with students about the dangers of drugs. And concerned members of the entertainment world have joined together to form the Entertainment Industries Council for a Drug-Free Society in order to deglamorize drug and alcohol use in the movies and on television.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I am here and for as long as it is a threat to the youth of our world.

That is why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have taped many public service announcements for radio and television. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on "The Merv Griffin Show," "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins, and countless news programs to discuss the subject. And I even recorded a music video aimed at reaching young people about the dangers of drugs.

Another television project in which I was delighted to participate was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project from parent group leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming that aired in November 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the



country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free.

In 1986, I was delighted to host a follow-up program, CHEMICAL PEOPLE II, which focused on the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency, and traffic fatalities. Again, the combined power of these two potent forces in our society -- television and community action -- served to encourage greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level.

Also, in recent years, worldwide awareness that illegal drug use is an international problem has begun to harden into worldwide resolve that the availability and illegal use of drugs cannot be permitted to continue unchecked. I traveled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985, to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem. That same year, I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings expressed deep concern about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, many of the First Ladies have encouraged and assisted in the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. I have

had opportunities to meet with some of these groups in various countries I have visited -- most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand. It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it.

Can we win the war against drugs? Yes, we can! In the six years since we started, we have seen profound changes. Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement, and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers, and entire communities to get involved in the struggle reflect a fundamental shift in attitude toward illegal drug use. Where once we saw passive acceptance of illegal drugs in our communities, today we more and more often see a refusal to tolerate the presence and the use of drugs within our families and our communities. People are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. And as individuals acknowledge the possibility, and the promise, of a drug-free society, they are encouraging others to work toward the same goal. Together, in our commitment and our involvement, we will resist and conquer the threat posed by drugs.

Won't you please join with us and help save our children? If you need information on parent groups, "Just Say No" clubs, or other ways you can help in the fight against youth drug abuse, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

WRITE:  
Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

## HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Guest Editorial About Drug Abuse and Young People  
by Nancy Reagan

The use of drugs by young people is one of the most serious problems the world faces today. Drugs are destroying the minds and bodies of our children and unless we can change the situation, we are in danger of losing part of an entire generation.

Drug abuse is one of our most democratic problems. It has invaded all segments of society, crossing all lines of race, ethnic background, religion and economics. It exists in wealthy suburbs, ghettos, cities, small towns, and isolated rural communities.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and, most importantly, to get them involved -- and thereby make them more knowledgeable.

Over the past several years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles both in this country and abroad visiting drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs and talking with as many young people as possible. What I have seen and the stories I have heard are enough to make the strongest hearts break. From Spokane, Washington, to Medford, New Jersey -- from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Rome, Italy, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on and what their lives had been like. I heard how they had



lied, cheated, stolen and fought for drugs. Some had run away from home and overdosed on whatever they could buy, beg, or steal -- pot, PCP, cocaine, uppers and downers, hashish, heroin, even insecticides. Often these drugs were mixed with alcohol -- a deadly combination -- but these children were too high to know or care.

Most of the children had begun their drug experiences with feelings of low self-esteem. Many began using drugs out of desperation for attention and love. But the deeper they descended into drug abuse, the more worthless and unloved they felt.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same -- that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

14 → Time and again, and in many languages, former drug users have told me they were finally able to stop because they had the support of their families. I am convinced that the ultimate prevention of drug abuse by young people goes hand in hand with strengthening the family. A strong family unit with solid values can do a lot to prevent kids from getting involved with drugs in the first place by offering them the guidance, love and support every child needs to lead a happy, healthy life. ~~Although it~~ must be admitted <sup>however</sup> that many children turned to drugs even though they had the support and love of their families.

The importance of parental involvement becomes even more critical when you consider the young age at which children are being offered drugs. I remember one of my first visits to an elementary school when I sat in on a drug prevention class for third graders. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults have not even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a threat that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them and encouraging because we are now fighting back.

There are signs that progress is being made. The 1986 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High Schools ~~Senior~~ Senior Survey show that one in twenty-five seniors use marijuana on a daily basis while one in twenty use alcohol nearly daily. While these numbers remain unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late '70s. Daily use of marijuana has diminished to nearly one-third of what it was then, and the daily use of alcohol has declined steadily, albeit modestly. Our progress is encouraging, yet the numbers make <sup>it</sup> clear that this is not a battle which can be won overnight. New threats, such as that posed by cocaine, will continue to arise. We cannot afford to let down our guard.

Our top priority is prevention -- through education. Children, parents, teachers and the general public need to become more knowledgeable about the problem. The greater knowledge we have, the better our chances of dealing effectively with the problem.

Over the past <sup>several</sup> ~~few~~ years, I have worked closely with the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth (NFP), the Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) and other parent organizations. These groups are leading the way in educating parents, children, communities, service organizations and others about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are assisting local parent groups in every state. In the past five years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. They are working effectively within their communities to combat school-age drug abuse and are taking their concerns to their state legislatures. Partly as a result of parents' efforts, many states have passed laws against the sale of drug paraphernalia and have enacted legislation to raise the legal drinking age to 21. Parents are proving that something can be done and that the time is past for excuses and denials.

<sup>TP</sup> → I am very encouraged also by a growing movement led by young people themselves. Kids are standing up against peer pressure, a major cause that lures youngsters to try drugs. I am talking about positive peer groups made up of students who make a point of not using drugs. These groups are very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. The "Just Say No" clubs that are forming in schools and communities all across this country and throughout the world are ~~a~~ wonderful examples of kids helping kids.

Sports celebrities and entertainers are getting involved in the fight against drugs too. Many sports heroes visit schools regularly to talk with students about the dangers of drugs. And concerned members of the entertainment world have joined together to form the Entertainment Industries Council for a Drug-Free Society in order to deglamorize drug and alcohol use in the movies and on television.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I am here and for as long as it is a threat to the youth of our world.

That is why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have taped many public service announcements for radio and television. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on "The Merv Griffith Show," "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins, and countless news programs to discuss the subject. And I even recorded a music video aimed at reaching young people about the dangers of drugs.

Another television project in which I was delighted to participate was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project from parent groups' leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national



programming that aired in November 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free.

In 1986, I was delighted to host a follow-up, <sup>Program,</sup> CHEMICAL PEOPLE II, which focused on the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency, and traffic fatalities. Again, the combined power of these two potent forces in our society -- television and community action -- served to encourage greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level.

14 → Also, in recent years, worldwide awareness that illegal drug use is an international problem has begun to harden into worldwide resolve that the availability and illegal use of drugs cannot be permitted to continue unchecked. I traveled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985, to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem. That same year, I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings expressed deep concern about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, many of the

First Ladies have encouraged and assisted in the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. I have had opportunities to meet with some of these groups in various countries I have visited -- most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand. It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it.

Can we win the war against drugs? Yes, we can! In the six years since we started, we have seen profound changes. Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement, and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers, and entire communities to get involved in the struggle reflect a fundamental shift in attitude toward illegal drug use. Where once we saw passive acceptance of illegal drugs in our communities, today we more and more often see a refusal to tolerate the presence and the use of drugs within our families and our communities. People are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. And as individuals acknowledge the possibility, and the promise of a drug-free society, they are encouraging others to work toward the same goal. Together, in our commitment and our involvement, we will resist and conquer the threat posed by drugs.

*leave in column*

Won't you please join with us and help save our children? If you need information on parent groups, "Just Say No" clubs, or other ways you can help in the fight against youth drug abuse,

-8-

please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

WRITE:

Nancy Reagan

ATTN: Drug Awareness

The White House

Washington, D.C. 20500

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 2, 1987

NOTE TO MARY GORDON:

Thank you for the opportunity to update Mrs. Reagan's Guest Editorial. I have suggested revisions of four paragraphs. Insert (A), on page 2, provides the most recent High School Senior Survey results, and minor modifications of three paragraphs on page 3, (inserts (B - D)), serve both to update and reflect the First Lady's more recent pronouncements, for example, regarding refusal to tolerate illegal drug use. The number of parent groups (9,000) remains correct.

Overall, it is an excellent editorial and I don't think we ought to "fix" a piece which is not broken. Please let me know if we can be of additional assistance.



Donald Ian Macdonald



# HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Guest Editorial About Drug Abuse and Young People  
*by Nancy Reagan*

The use of drugs by young people is one of the most serious problems the world faces today. Drugs are destroying the minds and bodies of our children and unless we can change the situation, we are in danger of losing part of an entire generation.

Drug abuse is one of our most democratic problems. It has invaded all segments of society, crossing all lines of race, ethnic background, religion and economics. It exists in wealthy suburbs, ghettos, cities, small towns, and isolated rural communities.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and, most importantly, to get them involved — and thereby make them more knowledgeable.

Over the past several years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles both in this country and abroad visiting drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs and talking with as many young people as possible. What I have seen and the stories I have heard are enough to make the strongest hearts break. From Spokane, Washington, to Medford, New Jersey — from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Rome, Italy, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on and what their lives had been like. I heard how they had lied, cheated, stolen and fought for drugs. Some had run away from home and overdosed on whatever they could buy, beg, or steal — pot, PCP, cocaine, uppers and downers, hashish, heroin, even insecticides. Often these drugs were mixed with alcohol — a deadly combination — but these children were too high to know or care.

Most of the children had begun their drug experiences with feelings of low self-esteem. Many began using drugs out of desperation for attention and love. But the deeper they descended into drug abuse, the more worthless and unloved they felt.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same — that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and that they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

Time and again, and in many languages, former drug users have told me they were finally able to stop because they had the support of their families. I am convinced that the ultimate prevention of drug abuse by young people goes hand in hand with strengthening the family. A strong family unit with solid values can do a lot to prevent kids from getting involved with drugs in the first place by offering them the guidance, love and support every child needs to lead a happy, healthy life. Although it must be admitted that many children turned to drugs even though they had the support and love of their families.

The importance of parental involvement becomes even more critical when you consider the young age at which children are being offered drugs. I remember one of my first visits to an elementary school when I sat in on a drug prevention class for third graders. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults have not even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a threat that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them and encouraging because we are now fighting back.

~~There are signs that progress is being made. The 1985 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that one in twenty seniors use marijuana on a daily basis and the same number use alcohol daily. While these numbers are still unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late 70's. The daily use of marijuana by high school seniors is now less than half of what it was then and the daily use of alcohol has steadily declined. While these numbers are encouraging, there is no doubt we still have a long way to go. We cannot afford to let down our guard. This is not a battle which can be won overnight.~~

Our top priority is prevention — through education. Children, parents, teachers and the general public need to become more knowledgeable about the problem. The greater knowledge we have, the better our chances of dealing effectively with the problem.

Over the past few years, I have worked closely with the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth (NFP), the Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) and other parent organizations. These groups are leading the way in educating parents, children, communities, service organizations and others about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are assisting local parent groups in every state. In the past five years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. They are working effectively within their communities to combat school-age drug abuse and are taking their concerns to their state legislatures. Partly as a result of parents' efforts, many states have passed laws against the sale of drug paraphernalia and have enacted legislation to raise the legal drinking age to 21. Parents are proving that something can be done and that the time is past for excuses and denials.

I am very encouraged also by a growing movement led by young people themselves. Kids are standing up against peer pressure, a major cause that lures youngsters to try drugs. I am talking about positive peer groups made up of students who make a point of *not* using drugs. These groups are very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. The "Just Say No" clubs that are forming in schools and communities all across this country and throughout the world are a wonderful example of kids helping kids.

Sports celebrities and entertainers are getting involved in the fight against drugs too. Many sports heroes visit schools regularly to talk with students about the dangers of drugs. And concerned members of the entertainment world have joined together to form the Entertainment Industries Council for a Drug-Free Society in order to deglamorize drug and alcohol use in the movies and on television.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I am here and for as long as it is a threat to the youth of our world.

That is why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have taped many public service announcements for radio and television. I have appeared on NBC's "Different Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on the "The Merv Griffin Show," "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins, and countless news programs to discuss the subject. And I even recorded a music video aimed at reaching young people about the dangers of drugs.

Another television project in which I was delighted to participate was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project

from parent group leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming that aired in November 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free.

In an effort to continue the momentum that was begun as a result of the first CHEMICAL PEOPLE project, a one-hour, follow-up program called CHEMICAL PEOPLE II is scheduled for broadcast on PBS this fall. I am delighted to host again this program which will address the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency and traffic fatalities. By combining two of the most potent forces in our society — television and community action — CHEMICAL PEOPLE II will be an important influence in encouraging greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level. (B)

There is also a growing awareness on a worldwide level that drug abuse is truly an international problem and that the use of drugs and their availability cannot continue unchecked. I traveled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985 to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem. That same year I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings is deeply concerned about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, I have received encouraging reports from many of the First Ladies concerning the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to meet with some of these groups in the various countries I have visited — most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand. It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it. (C)

I think we have made a difference in the five years since we started. Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers and entire communities to get involved reflect a positive shift in attitude. More and more people are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. What we need more than anything else is people — committed, determined, active people who will work together. (D)

Won't you please join with us and help save our children? If you need information on parent groups, "Just Say No" clubs, or other ways you can help in the fight against youth drug abuse, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

WRITE:  
Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

(A)

There are signs that progress is being made. The 1986 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that one in twenty-five seniors use marijuana on a daily basis while one in twenty use alcohol nearly daily. While these numbers remain unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late '70s. Daily use of marijuana has diminished to nearly one-third of what it was then, and the daily use of alcohol has declined steadily, albeit modestly. Our progress is encouraging, yet the numbers make clear that this is not a battle which can be won overnight. New threats, such as that posed by cocaine, will continue to arise. We cannot afford to let down our guard.

(B)

In 1986, I was delighted to host a follow-up, CHEMICAL PEOPLE II, which focused on the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency, and traffic fatalities. Again, the combined power of these two potent forces in our society--television and community action--served to encourage greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level.

(C)

Also, in recent years, worldwide awareness that illegal drug use is an international problem has begun to harden into worldwide resolve that the availability and illegal use of drugs cannot be permitted to continue unchecked. I travelled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985, to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem. That same year, I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings expressed deep concern about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, many of the First Ladies have encouraged and assisted in the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. I have had opportunities to meet with some of these groups in various countries I have visited--most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand. It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it.

D

Can we win the war against drugs? Yes we can! In the six years since we started, we have seen profound changes: Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement, and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers, and entire communities to get involved in the struggle reflect a fundamental shift in attitude toward illegal drug use. Where once we saw passive acceptance of illegal drugs in our communities, today we more and more often see a refusal to tolerate the presence and the use of drugs within our families and our communities. People are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. And as individuals acknowledge the possibility, and the promise, of a drug-free society, they are encouraging others to work toward the same goal. Together, in our commitment and our involvement, we will resist and conquer the threat posed by drugs.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

April 2, 1987

NOTE TO MARY GORDON:

Thank you for the opportunity to update Mrs. Reagan's Guest Editorial. I have suggested revisions of four paragraphs. Insert (A), on page 2, provides the most recent High School Senior Survey results, and minor modifications of three paragraphs on page 3, (inserts (B - D)), serve both to update and reflect the First Lady's more recent pronouncements, for example, regarding refusal to tolerate illegal drug use. The number of parent groups (9,000) remains correct.

Overall, it is an excellent editorial and I don't think we ought to "fix" a piece which is not broken. Please let me know if we can be of additional assistance.



Donald Ian Macdonald



# HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Guest Editorial About Drug Abuse and Young People  
*by Nancy Reagan*

The use of drugs by young people is one of the most serious problems the world faces today. Drugs are destroying the minds and bodies of our children and unless we can change the situation, we are in danger of losing part of an entire generation.

Drug abuse is one of our most democratic problems. It has invaded all segments of society, crossing all lines of race, ethnic background, religion and economics. It exists in wealthy suburbs, ghettos, cities, small towns, and isolated rural communities.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and, most importantly, to get them involved — and thereby make them more knowledgeable.

Over the past several years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles both in this country and abroad visiting drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs and talking with as many young people as possible. What I have seen and the stories I have heard are enough to make the strongest hearts break. From Spokane, Washington, to Medford, New Jersey — from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Rome, Italy, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on and what their lives had been like. I heard how they had lied, cheated, stolen and fought for drugs. Some had run away from home and overdosed on whatever they could buy, beg, or steal — pot, PCP, cocaine, uppers and downers, hashish, heroin, even insecticides. Often these drugs were mixed with alcohol — a deadly combination — but these children were too high to know or care.

Most of the children had begun their drug experiences with feelings of low self-esteem. Many began using drugs out of desperation for attention and love. But the deeper they descended into drug abuse, the more worthless and unloved they felt.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same — that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and that they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

Time and again, and in many languages, former drug users have told me they were finally able to stop because they had the support of their families. I am convinced that the ultimate prevention of drug abuse by young people goes hand in hand with strengthening the family. A strong family unit with solid values can do a lot to prevent kids from getting involved with drugs in the first place by offering them the guidance, love and support every child needs to lead a happy, healthy life. Although it must be admitted that many children turned to drugs even though they had the support and love of their families.

The importance of parental involvement becomes even more critical when you consider the young age at which children are being offered drugs. I remember one of my first visits to an elementary school when I sat in on a drug prevention class for third graders. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults have not even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a threat that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them and encouraging because we are now fighting back.

~~There are signs that progress is being made. The 1985 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that one in twenty seniors use marijuana on a daily basis and the same number use alcohol daily. While these numbers are still unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late 70's. The daily use of marijuana by high school seniors is now less than half of what it was then and the daily use of alcohol has steadily declined. While these numbers are encouraging, there is no doubt we still have a long way to go. We cannot afford to let down our guard. This is not a battle which can be won overnight.~~

Our top priority is prevention — through education. Children, parents, teachers and the general public need to become more knowledgeable about the problem. The greater knowledge we have, the better our chances of dealing effectively with the problem.

Over the past few years, I have worked closely with the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth (NFP), the Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) and other parent organizations. These groups are leading the way in educating parents, children, communities, service organizations and others about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are assisting local parent groups in every state. In the past five years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. They are working effectively within their communities to combat school-age drug abuse and are taking their concerns to their state legislatures. Partly as a result of parents' efforts, many states have passed laws against the sale of drug paraphernalia and have enacted legislation to raise the legal drinking age to 21. Parents are proving that something *can* be done and that the time is past for excuses and denials.

I am very encouraged also by a growing movement led by young people themselves. Kids are standing up against peer pressure, a major cause that lures youngsters to try drugs. I am talking about positive peer groups made up of students who make a point of *not* using drugs. These groups are very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. The "Just Say No" clubs that are forming in schools and communities all across this country and throughout the world are a wonderful example of kids helping kids.

Sports celebrities and entertainers are getting involved in the fight against drugs too. Many sports heroes visit schools regularly to talk with students about the dangers of drugs. And concerned members of the entertainment world have joined together to form the Entertainment Industries Council for a Drug-Free Society in order to deglamorize drug and alcohol use in the movies and on television.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I am here and for as long as it is a threat to the youth of our world.

That is why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have taped many public service announcements for radio and television. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on the "The Merv Griffin Show," "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins, and countless news programs to discuss the subject. And I even recorded a music video aimed at reaching young people about the dangers of drugs.

Another television project in which I was delighted to participate was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project

from parent group leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming that aired in November 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free.

In an effort to continue the momentum that was begun as a result of the first CHEMICAL PEOPLE project, a one-hour, follow-up program called CHEMICAL PEOPLE II is scheduled for broadcast on PBS this fall. I am delighted to host again this program which will address the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency and traffic fatalities. By combining two of the most potent forces in our society — television and community action — CHEMICAL PEOPLE II will be an important influence in encouraging greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level. (B)

There is also a growing awareness on a worldwide level that drug abuse is truly an international problem and that the use of drugs and their availability cannot continue unchecked. I traveled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985 to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem. That same year I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings is deeply concerned about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, I have received encouraging reports from many of the First Ladies concerning the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to meet with some of these groups in the various countries I have visited — most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand. It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it. (C)

I think we have made a difference in the five years since we started. Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers and entire communities to get involved reflect a positive shift in attitude. More and more people are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. What we need more than anything else is people — committed, determined, active people who will work together. (D)

Won't you please join with us and help save our children? If you need information on parent groups, "Just Say No" clubs, or other ways you can help in the fight against youth drug abuse, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

**WRITE:**

Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

(A)

There are signs that progress is being made. The 1986 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that one in twenty-five seniors use marijuana on a daily basis while one in twenty use alcohol nearly daily. While these numbers remain unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late '70s. Daily use of marijuana has diminished to nearly one-third of what it was then, and the daily use of alcohol has declined steadily, albeit modestly. Our progress is encouraging, yet the numbers make clear that this is not a battle which can be won overnight. New threats, such as that posed by cocaine, will continue to arise. We cannot afford to let down our guard.

(B)

In 1986, I was delighted to host a follow-up, CHEMICAL PEOPLE II, which focused on the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency, and traffic fatalities. Again, the combined power of these two potent forces in our society--television and community action--served to encourage greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level.

(C)

Also, in recent years, worldwide awareness that illegal drug use is an international problem has begun to harden into worldwide resolve that the availability and illegal use of drugs cannot be permitted to continue unchecked. I travelled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985, to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem. That same year, I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings expressed deep concern about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, many of the First Ladies have encouraged and assisted in the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. I have had opportunities to meet with some of these groups in various countries I have visited--most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand. It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it.

(D)

Can we win the war against drugs? Yes we can! In the six years since we started, we have seen profound changes: Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement, and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers, and entire communities to get involved in the struggle reflect a fundamental shift in attitude toward illegal drug use. Where once we saw passive acceptance of illegal drugs in our communities, today we more and more often see a refusal to tolerate the presence and the use of drugs within our families and our communities. People are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. And as individuals acknowledge the possibility, and the promise, of a drug-free society, they are encouraging others to work toward the same goal. Together, in our commitment and our involvement, we will resist and conquer the threat posed by drugs.

## HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Guest Editorial About Drug Abuse and Young People  
by Nancy Reagan

The use of drugs by young people is one of the most serious problems the world faces today. Drugs are destroying the minds and bodies of our children and unless we can change the situation, we are in danger of losing part of an entire generation.

Drug abuse is one of our most democratic problems. It has invaded all segments of society, crossing all lines of race, ethnic background, religion and economics. It exists in wealthy suburbs, ghettos, cities, small towns, and isolated rural communities.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and, most importantly, to get them involved -- and thereby make them more knowledgeable.

Over the past several years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles both in this country and abroad visiting drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs and talking with as many young people as possible. What I have seen and the stories I have heard are enough to make the strongest hearts break. From Spokane, Washington, to Medford, New Jersey -- from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Rome, Italy, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on and what their lives had been like. I heard how they had



lied, cheated, stolen and fought for drugs. Some had run away from home and overdosed on whatever they could buy, beg, or steal -- pot, PCP, cocaine, uppers and downers, hashish, heroin, even insecticides. Often these drugs were mixed with alcohol -- a deadly combination -- but these children were too high to know or care.

Most of the children had begun their drug experiences with feelings of low self-esteem. Many began using drugs out of desperation for attention and love. But the deeper they descended into drug abuse, the more worthless and unloved they felt.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same -- that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

Time and again, and in many languages, former drug users have told me they were finally able to stop because they had the support of their families. I am convinced that the ultimate prevention of drug abuse by young people goes hand in hand with strengthening the family. A strong family unit with solid values can do a lot to prevent kids from getting involved with drugs in the first place by offering them the guidance, love and support every child needs to lead a happy, healthy life. Although it must be admitted that many children turned to drugs even though they had the support and love of their families.

The importance of parental involvement becomes even more critical when you consider the young age at which children are being offered drugs. I remember one of my first visits to an elementary school when I sat in on a drug prevention class for third graders. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults have not even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a threat that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them and encouraging because we are now fighting back.

There are signs that progress is being made. The 1986 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High Schools Senior Survey show that one in twenty-five seniors use marijuana on a daily basis while one in twenty use alcohol nearly daily. While these numbers remain unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late '70s. Daily use of marijuana has diminished to nearly one-third of what it was then, and the daily use of alcohol has declined steadily, albeit modestly. Our progress is encouraging, yet the numbers make clear that this is not a battle which can be won overnight. New threats, such as that posed by cocaine, will continue to arise. We cannot afford to let down our guard.

Our top priority is prevention - through education. Children, parents, teachers and the general public need to become more knowledgeable about the problem. The greater knowledge we have, the better our chances of dealing effectively with the problem.

Over the past few years, I have worked closely with the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth (NFP), the Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) and other parent organizations. These groups are leading the way in educating parents, children, communities, service organizations and others about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are assisting local parent groups in every state. In the past five years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. They are working effectively within their communities to combat school-age drug abuse and are taking their concerns to their state legislatures. Partly as a result of parents' efforts, many states have passed laws against the sale of drug paraphernalia and have enacted legislation to raise the legal drinking age to 21. Parents are proving that something can be done and that the time is past for excuses and denials. I am very encouraged also by a growing movement led by young people themselves. Kids are standing up against peer pressure, a major cause that lures youngsters to try drugs. I am talking about positive peer groups made up of students who make a point of not using drugs. These groups are very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. The "Just Say No" clubs that are forming in schools and communities all across this country and throughout the world are a wonderful example of kids helping kids.



Sports celebrities and entertainers are getting involved in the fight against drugs too. Many sports heroes visit schools regularly to talk with students about the dangers of drugs. And concerned members of the entertainment world have joined together to form the Entertainment Industries Council for a Drug-Free Society in order to deglamorize drug and alcohol use in the movies and on television.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I am here and for as long as it is a threat to the youth of our world.

That is why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have taped many public service announcements for radio and television. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on "The Merv Griffith Show," "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins, and countless news programs to discuss the subject. And I even recorded a music video aimed at reaching young people about the dangers of drugs.

Another television project in which I was delighted to participate was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project from parent groups leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national

programming that aired in November 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free.

In 1986, I was delighted to host a follow-up, CHEMICAL PEOPLE II, which focused on the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency, and traffic fatalities. Again, the combined power of these two potent forces in our society -- television and community action -- served to encourage greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level.

Also, in recent years, worldwide awareness that illegal drug use is an international problem has begun to harden into worldwide resolve that the availability and illegal use of drugs cannot be permitted to continue unchecked. I traveled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985, to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem. That same year, I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings expressed deep concern about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, many of the

First Ladies have encouraged and assisted in the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. I have had opportunities to meet with some of these groups in various countries I have visited -- most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand. It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it.

Can we win the war against drugs? Yes we can! In the six years since we started, we have seen profound changes: Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement, and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers, and entire communities to get involved in the struggle reflect a fundamental shift in attitude toward illegal drug use. Where once we saw passive acceptance of illegal drugs in our communities, today we more and more often see a refusal to tolerate the presence and the use of drugs within our families and our communities. People are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. And as individuals acknowledge the possibility, and the promise, of a drug-free society, they are encouraging others to work toward the same goal. Together, in our commitment and our involvement, we will resist and conquer the threat posed by drugs.

Won't you please join with us and help save our children? If you need information on parent groups, "Just Say No" clubs, or other ways you can help in the fight against youth drug abuse,



-8-

please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

WRITE:

Nancy Reagan

ATTN: Drug Awareness

The White House

Washington, D.C. 20500

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Mrs. Reagan:

More Camp David homework.

We are about ready to send  
your revised Drug Editorial  
to the printers so that we  
can have copies for the  
Far East trip.

Please review and make any  
changes.

Thank you.

Elaine



(Second Draft/B.Koons)

HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
A Guest Editorial About Drug Abuse and Young People  
by Nancy Reagan

The use of drugs by young people is one of the most serious problems the world faces today. Drugs are destroying the minds and bodies of our children and unless we can change the situation, we are in danger of losing part of an entire generation.

Drug abuse is one of our most democratic problems. It has invaded all segments of society, crossing all lines of race, ethnic background, religion and economics. It exists in wealthy suburbs, ghettos, cities, small towns, and isolated rural communities.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and most importantly to get them involved. *and then by <sup>make them</sup> more knowledgeable. (pp.?)*

Over the past several years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles both in this country and abroad visiting drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs and talking with as many young people as possible. What I have seen and the stories I have heard are enough to make the strongest hearts break. From Spokane, Washington, to Medford, New Jersey -- from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Rome, Italy, the children I met were all anxious to

## Guest Editorial on Drug Abuse Page Two

tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on and what their lives had been like. I heard how they had lied, cheated, stolen and fought for drugs. Some had run away from home and overdosed on whatever they could buy ~~or~~ <sup>not steal</sup> beg, -- pot, PCP, cocaine, uppers and downers, hashish, heroin, even insecticides. Often these drugs were mixed with alcohol -- a deadly combination -- but these children were too high to know or care.

Most of the children had begun their drug experiences with feelings of low self-esteem. Many began using drugs out of desperation for attention and love. But the deeper they descended into drug abuse, the more worthless and unloved they felt.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same -- that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and that they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

Time and again, and in many languages, former drug users have told me they were finally able to stop because they had the support of their families. I am convinced that the ultimate prevention of drug abuse by young people goes hand in hand with strengthening the family. A strong family unit with solid values can do a lot to prevent kids from getting involved with drugs in the first place by offering them the guidance, love and support every child needs to lead a happy, healthy life.

*Although, it must be admitted that many children turn to drugs even though they had the support & love of their families.*

Guest Editorial on Drug Abuse  
Page Three

The importance of parental involvement becomes even more critical when you consider the young age at which children are being offered drugs. I remember one of my first visits to an elementary school when I sat in on a drug prevention class for third graders. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults have not even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a threat that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them and encouraging because we are now fighting back.

There are signs that progress is being made. The 1985 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that one in twenty seniors use marijuana on a daily basis and the same number use alcohol daily. While these numbers are still unacceptably high, they show a decline in the overall use since the peak years of the late 70's. The daily use of marijuana by high school seniors is now less than half of what it was then and the daily use of alcohol has steadily declined. While these numbers are encouraging, there is no doubt we still have a long way to go. We cannot afford to let down our guard. This is not a battle which can be won overnight.

Our top priority is prevention -- through education. Children, parents, teachers and the general public need to become more knowledgeable about the problem. The greater knowledge we have, the better our chances of dealing effectively with the problem.



Guest Editorial on Drug Abuse  
Page Four

Over the past few years, I have worked closely with the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth (NFP), the Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) and other parent organizations. These groups are leading the way in educating parents, children, communities, service organizations and others about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and are assisting local parent groups in every state. In the past five years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. They are working effectively within their communities to combat school-age drug abuse and are taking their concerns to their state legislatures. Partly as a result of parents' efforts, many states have passed laws against the sale of drug paraphernalia and have enacted legislation to raise the legal drinking age to 21. Parents are proving that something can be done and that the time is past for excuses and denials.

I am very encouraged also by a growing movement led by young people themselves. Kids are standing up against peer pressure, a major cause that lures youngsters to try drugs. I am talking about positive peer groups made up of students who make a point of not using drugs. These groups are very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. The "Just Say No" clubs that are forming in schools and communities all across this country and throughout the world are a wonderful example of kids helping kids.

Guest Editorial on Drug Abuse  
Page Five

Sports celebrities and entertainers are getting involved in the fight against drugs too. Many sports heroes visit schools regularly to talk with students about the dangers of drugs. And concerned members of the entertainment world have joined together to form the Entertainment Industries Council for a Drug-Free Society in order to deglamorize drug and alcohol use in the movies and on television.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I am here and for as long as it is a threat to the youth of our world.

That is why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have taped many public service announcements for radio and television. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on "The Merv Griffin Show," "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins, and countless news programs to discuss the subject. And I even recorded a music video aimed at reaching young people about the dangers of drugs.

Another television project in which I was delighted to participate was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse.

Guest Editorial on Drug Abuse  
Page Six

When I heard about the project from parent group leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming that aired in November 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free.

In an effort to continue the momentum that was begun as a result of the first CHEMICAL PEOPLE project, a one-hour, follow-up program called CHEMICAL PEOPLE II is scheduled for broadcast on PBS this fall. I am delighted to host again this program which will address the relationship of drugs to other adolescent problems such as teenage suicides, school dropouts, teenage delinquency and traffic fatalities. By combining two of the most potent forces in our society -- television and community action -- CHEMICAL PEOPLE II will be an important influence in encouraging greater participation of task forces on a grassroots level.

There is also a growing awareness on a worldwide level that drug abuse is truly an international problem and that the use of drugs and their availability cannot continue unchecked. I traveled to Rome, Italy, in the spring of 1985 to discuss this danger with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. I was especially encouraged by his personal commitment and concern about this tragic problem.



Guest Editorial on Drug Abuse  
Page Seven

That same year I hosted two international conferences on the subject of youth drug abuse that were attended by many wives of foreign leaders from around the globe. One was held at the White House and the other at the United Nations in New York. Each of the First Ladies attending those meetings is deeply concerned about the dangerous effects that drug abuse is having on all of our societies. Since those conferences were held, I have received encouraging reports from many of the First Ladies concerning the formation of parent groups and "Just Say No" clubs in their countries. Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to meet with some of these groups in the various countries I have visited -- (most recently in the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Thailand.) It is my hope that all nations will continue to learn about the problem of drug abuse and do everything they can to eliminate it.

I think we have made a difference in the five years since we started. Individuals have begun to take responsibility for educating themselves about drug abuse and finding ways to counter it. The growth of the parent group movement, student peer group movement and the willingness of educators, sports figures, entertainers and entire communities to get involved reflect a positive shift in attitude. More and more people are recognizing that the problem can be overcome. What we need more than anything else is people -- committed, determined, active people who will work together.

Guest Editorial on Drug Abuse  
Page Eight

Won't you please join with us and help save our children? If you need information on parent groups, "Just Say No" clubs, or other ways you can help in the fight against youth drug abuse, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

WRITE:

Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

4/86



# THE DRUG ABUSE EPIDEMIC

A Guest Editorial About Youth Abuse of Drugs and Alcohol

*by Nancy Reagan*

The use of drugs by young people is one of our country's greatest problems. Drugs are ruining the minds and bodies of our children, and if we don't do something now to change the situation, we are in danger of losing an entire generation.

The statistics are chilling. The 1984 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that more than 25 percent of high school seniors use marijuana and over 67 percent use alcohol on a monthly basis. Although these numbers represent a decline since the 1983 survey — when 27 percent used marijuana and over 69 percent used alcohol — there is still a long way to go. In the abstract, these are just numbers; but behind the numbers are young lives and lost dreams.

The numbers — as well as the thousands of letters I receive from all over the country — indicate that drug abuse has reached epidemic proportions. Right now, it is like one of those dread diseases for which there is no cure. And like a disease, it knows no social nor economic boundaries. It is our most democratic problem. Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, black and white, urban and rural youth are all affected.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and to get them involved. That's why I decided to travel the country, to visit as many drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs as possible and to talk to as many young people as possible.

What I have seen and the stories I have heard in the last few years are enough to make the strongest hearts break. The personal tragedies are numerous yet they have a common thread. Children who are on drugs become alienated from their communities, their families, themselves. Whatever the reason for a child's first experimenting with drugs, the end result is always the same. They become lost in a drug-induced maze from which there seems no way out. They turn against their families and friends — the very relationships that would offer the best hope for working problems out — and instead enter a world of isolation.

I have traveled thousands of miles talking with kids, listening to them, asking them questions and learning a good deal. From Spokane, Washington to Medford, New Jersey — from Lansing, Michigan to Tulsa, Oklahoma, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on, what their lives had been like. They talked about drugs I'd never heard of. They had had experiences that were hair-raising. I heard how drugs had deadened their hope, their promise, their spirit and their love. And how drugs finally destroyed the very fiber of their families.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same — that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and that they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

The victims are getting younger all the time. I once visited a third grade class at the E. Rivers Elementary School in Atlanta and sat in on a drug prevention program. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults haven't even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a problem that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them. And encouraging because we are finally fighting back.

Our top priority is prevention. It is safer and more effective to thwart drug abuse before it begins, than to wait until after the fact, hoping young people will come in for treatment. Sometimes they do, but sometimes it is too late. We must educate parents, as well as their children, to the dangers of drugs.

In fact, the closest thing to a vaccine for this disease called drug abuse is parent groups. Parents are banding together and they are having a powerful impact on the drug crisis. I am so happy they are becoming involved instead of pushing the problem off on the government. After all, the government didn't have the children — parents did and the ultimate responsibility is theirs.

In the past four years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. I think the parents are showing the professionals that something can be done on a scale larger than previously thought.

Kids are helping kids, too. I recently met several young people who have found ways of resisting the pressure to use drugs and who are now working to help others do the same. Some used drugs at one point in their lives, others did not. Their stories are told in a new youth-oriented book entitled *Teens in Action* which is published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. This book describes the problems, challenges, successes and hopes that 15 young people have experienced in trying to succeed in environments that too often promote rather than discourage drug abuse. These young people are taking action against drug abuse in their homes, schools and communities. By sharing their experiences with other kids, they hope to promote drug-free lifestyles for young people everywhere.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I'm here.

And that's why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on "The Merv Griffin Show" and countless news programs. Most recently I have appeared on "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins to discuss the subject.

Another television project in which I participated was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project from parent group leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming that aired in November of 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free. I think this had a tremendous impact on people, young and old.

I do think we have made a difference in the four years since we started. I know I'm seeing more programs about drug abuse on TV than before, more people publicly talking about their problems and wanting to find help. So I'm encouraged that the effort has had some result. However, we can't do it alone. What we need more than anything else is people — committed, determined, active people who will work together.

A mother, who is a reformed alcoholic from Port Chester, New York, wrote me: "When the roots of a tree die, the tree is lost. If the youth of America die, the nation is lost!" I couldn't agree with her more. Won't you please join us and help save our children?

If there is not a parent group in your area, and if you want to start one and don't know how to do it, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

**WRITE:**

Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

# THE DRUG ABUSE EPIDEMIC

A Guest Editorial About Youth Abuse of Drugs and Alcohol

*by Nancy Reagan*

The use of drugs by young people is one of our country's greatest problems. Drugs are ruining the minds and bodies of our children, and if we don't do something now to change the situation, we are in danger of losing an entire generation.

The statistics are chilling. The 1984 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that more than 25 percent of high school seniors use marijuana and over 67 percent use alcohol on a monthly basis. Although these numbers represent a decline since the 1983 survey — when 27 percent used marijuana and over 69 percent used alcohol — there is still a long way to go. In the abstract, these are just numbers; but behind the numbers are young lives and lost dreams.

The numbers — as well as the thousands of letters I receive from all over the country — indicate that drug abuse has reached epidemic proportions. Right now, it is like one of those dread diseases for which there is no cure. And like a disease, it knows no social nor economic boundaries. It is our most democratic problem. Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, black and white, urban and rural youth are all affected.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and to get them involved. That's why I decided to travel the country, to visit as many drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs as possible and to talk to as many young people as possible.

What I have seen and the stories I have heard in the last few years are enough to make the strongest hearts break. The personal tragedies are numerous yet they have a common thread. Children who are on drugs become alienated from their communities, their families, themselves. Whatever the reason for a child's first experimenting with drugs, the end result is always the same. They become lost in a drug-induced maze from which there seems no way out. They turn against their families and friends — the very relationships that would offer the best hope for working problems out — and instead enter a world of isolation.

I have traveled thousands of miles talking with kids, listening to them, asking them questions and learning a good deal. From Spokane, Washington to Medford, New Jersey — from Lansing, Michigan to Tulsa, Oklahoma, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on, what their lives had been like. They talked about drugs I'd never heard of. They had had experiences that were hair-raising. I heard how drugs had deadened their hope, their promise, their spirit and their love. And how drugs finally destroyed the very fiber of their families.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same — that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and that they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

The victims are getting younger all the time. I once visited a third grade class at the E. Rivers Elementary School in Atlanta and sat in on a drug prevention program. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults haven't even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a problem that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them. And encouraging because we are finally fighting back.

Our top priority is prevention. It is safer and more effective to thwart drug abuse before it begins, than to wait until after the fact, hoping young people will come in for treatment. Sometimes they do, but sometimes it is too late. We must educate parents, as well as their children, to the dangers of drugs.

In fact, the closest thing to a vaccine for this disease called drug abuse is parent groups. Parents are banding together and they are having a powerful impact on the drug crisis. I am so happy they are becoming involved instead of pushing the problem off on the government. After all, the government didn't have the children — parents did and the ultimate responsibility is theirs.

In the past four years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. I think the parents are showing the professionals that something can be done on a scale larger than previously thought.

Kids are helping kids, too. I recently met several young people who have found ways of resisting the pressure to use drugs and who are now working to help others do the same. Some used drugs at one point in their lives, others did not. Their stories are told in a new youth-oriented book entitled *Teens in Action* which is published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. This book describes the problems, challenges, successes and hopes that 15 young people have experienced in trying to succeed in environments that too often promote rather than discourage drug abuse. These young people are taking action against drug abuse in their homes, schools and communities. By sharing their experiences with other kids, they hope to promote drug-free lifestyles for young people everywhere.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I'm here.

And that's why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on "The Merv Griffin Show" and countless news programs. Most recently I have appeared on "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins to discuss the subject.

Another television project in which I participated was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project from parent group leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming that aired in November of 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free. I think this had a tremendous impact on people, young and old.

I do think we have made a difference in the four years since we started. I know I'm seeing more programs about drug abuse on TV than before, more people publicly talking about their problems and wanting to find help. So I'm encouraged that the effort has had some result. However, we can't do it alone. What we need more than anything else is people — committed, determined, active people who will work together.

A mother, who is a reformed alcoholic from Port Chester, New York, wrote me: "When the roots of a tree die, the tree is lost. If the youth of America die, the nation is lost!" I couldn't agree with her more. Won't you please join us and help save our children?

If there is not a parent group in your area, and if you want to start one and don't know how to do it, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

**WRITE:**  
Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

# THE DRUG ABUSE EPIDEMIC

A Guest Editorial About Youth Abuse of Drugs and Alcohol

*by Nancy Reagan*

The use of drugs by young people is one of our country's greatest problems. Drugs are ruining the minds and bodies of our children, and if we don't do something now to change the situation, we are in danger of losing an entire generation.

The statistics are chilling. The 1984 findings of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) High School Senior Survey show that more than 25 percent of high school seniors use marijuana and over 67 percent use alcohol on a monthly basis. Although these numbers represent a decline since the 1983 survey — when 27 percent used marijuana and over 69 percent used alcohol — there is still a long way to go. In the abstract, these are just numbers; but behind the numbers are young lives and lost dreams.

The numbers — as well as the thousands of letters I receive from all over the country — indicate that drug abuse has reached epidemic proportions. Right now, it is like one of those dread diseases for which there is no cure. And like a disease, it knows no social nor economic boundaries. It is our most democratic problem. Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, black and white, urban and rural youth are all affected.

Never in my life have I felt an issue was so compelling as this one. My primary purpose in the battle against drugs has been to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and to get them involved. That's why I decided to travel the country, to visit as many drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs as possible and to talk to as many young people as possible.

What I have seen and the stories I have heard in the last few years are enough to make the strongest hearts break. The personal tragedies are numerous yet they have a common thread. Children who are on drugs become alienated from their communities, their families, themselves. Whatever the reason for a child's first experimenting with drugs, the end result is always the same. They become lost in a drug-induced maze from which there seems no way out. They turn against their families and friends — the very relationships that would offer the best hope for working problems out — and instead enter a world of isolation.

I have traveled thousands of miles talking with kids, listening to them, asking them questions and learning a good deal. From Spokane, Washington to Medford, New Jersey — from Lansing, Michigan to Tulsa, Oklahoma, the children I met were all anxious to tell me how they had gotten into drugs, who turned them on, what their lives had been like. They talked about drugs I'd never heard of. They had had experiences that were hair-raising. I heard how drugs had deadened their hope, their promise, their spirit and their love. And how drugs finally destroyed the very fiber of their families.

When they finished talking, the conclusion was always the same — that they were sorry they had ever gotten involved with drugs in the first place, and that they wished more than anything to reestablish their relationships with their families and have normal, happy lives again.

The victims are getting younger all the time. I once visited a third grade class at the E. Rivers Elementary School in Atlanta and sat in on a drug prevention program. It struck me as odd to see little boys in Cub Scout uniforms and little girls in jumpers learning about drugs that many adults haven't even heard of. The scene was both terrifying and encouraging. Terrifying because drugs are such a problem that even third graders must be prepared to deal with them. And encouraging because we are finally fighting back.

Our top priority is prevention. It is safer and more effective to thwart drug abuse before it begins, than to wait until after the fact, hoping young people will come in for treatment. Sometimes they do, but sometimes it is too late. We must educate parents, as well as their children, to the dangers of drugs.

In fact, the closest thing to a vaccine for this disease called drug abuse is parent groups. Parents are banding together and they are having a powerful impact on the drug crisis. I am so happy they are becoming involved instead of pushing the problem off on the government. After all, the government didn't have the children — parents did and the ultimate responsibility is theirs.

In the past four years, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to over 9,000 across the country. I think the parents are showing the professionals that something can be done on a scale larger than previously thought.

Kids are helping kids, too. I recently met several young people who have found ways of resisting the pressure to use drugs and who are now working to help others do the same. Some used drugs at one point in their lives, others did not. Their stories are told in a new youth-oriented book entitled *Teens in Action* which is published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. This book describes the problems, challenges, successes and hopes that 15 young people have experienced in trying to succeed in environments that too often promote rather than discourage drug abuse. These young people are taking action against drug abuse in their homes, schools and communities. By sharing their experiences with other kids, they hope to promote drug-free lifestyles for young people everywhere.

The White House is committed to the drive against drugs. My husband's concern is as strong and deep as mine. And I intend to keep the spotlight on drug abuse as long as I'm here.

And that's why I have been working through the medium of television to try to reach the widest audience possible. I have appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse, and co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America. I was also on "The Merv Griffin Show" and countless news programs. Most recently I have appeared on "Hour Magazine" with Gary Collins to discuss the subject.

Another television project in which I participated was THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about the project from parent group leaders, I asked to see the pilot program. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming that aired in November of 1983. It was a tremendous success. Nearly 11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. Through continued community support, many of those town meetings have grown into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free. I think this had a tremendous impact on people, young and old.

I do think we have made a difference in the four years since we started. I know I'm seeing more programs about drug abuse on TV than before, more people publicly talking about their problems and wanting to find help. So I'm encouraged that the effort has had some result. However, we can't do it alone. What we need more than anything else is people — committed, determined, active people who will work together.

A mother, who is a reformed alcoholic from Port Chester, New York, wrote me: "When the roots of a tree die, the tree is lost. If the youth of America die, the nation is lost!" I couldn't agree with her more. Won't you please join us and help save our children?

If there is not a parent group in your area, and if you want to start one and don't know how to do it, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

**WRITE:**  
Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

# THE DRUG ABUSE EPIDEMIC

A Guest Editorial About Youth Abuse of Drugs and Alcohol

by Nancy Reagan

The use of drugs by young people is one of our country's greatest problems. It is a plague that is ruining the minds and bodies of our children. If we don't do something right now about drug abuse, we are in danger of losing an entire generation of our children.

Never in my life have I felt as compelled to do something about an issue as I feel about this one. My primary purpose in this battle against drugs is to draw attention to the problem, to make people aware and get them involved. That's why I decided to travel around the country to visit as many drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs as possible and talk to as many young people as possible.

And that's why I have been working through the medium of television to try and reach the widest audience possible. Earlier this year I appeared on NBC's "Diff'rent Strokes" in an episode on drug abuse. In October, I co-hosted a special edition of "Good Morning America" on ABC which was devoted exclusively to the problem of drug abuse in America.

And I am very excited about another television project called THE CHEMICAL PEOPLE, a PBS program aimed at helping communities organize against drug and alcohol abuse. When I heard about it from parent group leaders, I asked to see it myself. I was so impressed by what I saw that I jumped at the chance to host the two hours of national programming. The two-part program which was broadcast November 2 and 9 was a tremendous success. Nearly



11,000 town meetings were held across the country where people gathered to watch the programs together. With continued community support, many of those town meetings will grow into permanent task forces aimed at helping our children be drug-free.

The things I have seen and heard in the last few years are enough to make the strongest hearts break. The personal tragedies are too sad and too numerous to detail. Drugs ruin lives before they have a chance to develop and then compound the damage by destroying the family ties that offer the best hope. Drugs are taking captive millions of our children, and even killing them.

I have traveled thousands of miles talking with kids, listening to them, asking them questions and learning a good deal. Whether it was in Ames, Iowa, Tampa, Florida, or Little Rock, Arkansas, they all seemed so anxious to tell me how they got into drugs, who turned them on, what their lives had been like. They talked about drugs I'd never even heard of. They had had experiences that were hair-raising. I heard how drugs had killed their hope, their promise, their spirit and their love. And how drugs had turned them against their friends and families and toward a world of pain and isolation.

But when they finished, the result was always the same -- that they wished they had never gotten involved. And the one thing they wanted more than anything else was to re-establish their relationship with their families and have a normal, happy family life again.



Editorial on Drug Abuse  
by Nancy Reagan  
Page 6

If there is not a parent group in your area, and if you want to start one and don't know how to do it, please write to me. I will make certain you get the information you need.

WRITE: Nancy Reagan  
ATTN: Drug Awareness  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

12-83

# # #