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Photo by Shu-Shing Chen

Discussion leader Craig Bryan leans over a group of young people as he emphasizes an important point about the risk of using of drugs.

Local group combats drug abuse by teaching children and parents

By Eric Bottjer
Of the Emerald

While a media blitz on drug and alcohol abuse is sweeping the country, a local organization is trying to come up with solutions to the problem that still will work even when substance abuse is no longer front-page news.

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Reaching Adolescents' Parents Promptly is a free community service recently organized by two staff members of the Horizon Recovery Center, a local substance-abuse treatment center.

The program is designed to teach parents about the warning signs of adolescent drug and alcohol abuse and help them spot the problem in their children.

"We emphasize there is no single indicator that points to a drug problem," said Mikal Krummel, one of the organizers of RAPP. "The assessment is a gray process. We tell parents what some of the symptoms are and advise them on when to seek professional help."

Krummel and Lydia Lord, also a Horizon staff member, came up with the concept for RAPP about three months ago.

"We thought it would be a good idea to expand the concept of intervention to have direct contact with people who care the most," Krummel said.

The idea became a reality about a month ago, when the parents of a rehabilitated child said they wanted to share their recovery experience with friends. The parents agreed to be a host family, and the experiment was a success.

RAPP sessions are held in private homes at the request of the host family, who are encouraged to invite interested friends.

At least two Horizon staff members attend each two-hour session. They describe symptoms of drug abuse and discuss

various treatment options.

A shoebox full of common household items that double as drug paraphernalia helps drive the message home to parents: an ordinary pen that can be quickly converted into a pipe; an empty 7-Up can with about two dozen small holes poked in its side; and a large oval earring that opens to reveal a small compartment in its center.

RAPP was originally intended for adults, but by the second session some of the parents brought their children. Lord said the parents and children broke into separate groups and discussed their feelings of drug awareness with a staff member.

"When the parents and children were reunited, both found they had been talking about the same concerns," Lord said.

One of the most eye-opening experiences in the program was when about a dozen children, ranging in age from six to 16, showed up to one of the meetings.

"All of them came out and said they had had contact with drugs, and all were concerned about it. Their parents were shocked," Krummel said.

Open communication is one of the keys to the program's success, Lord said. "People are more comfortable in their homes. There is more trust involved, which makes it much easier for communication," she said.

Another reason RAPP is successful is because it targets a

Continued on Page 8

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