

Chemical abuse message hit home

Impact course offers info on drug addiction

By Cami Swanson
Emerald Reporter

Approximately 80 students, mostly freshmen from the Greek system and resident halls, packed into a small room in the Education building Friday night to begin the weekend-long, drug awareness Impact program taught by Michael Leeds.

Some came to the Impact training because they were required to by their fraternity, sorority, or dormitory. Some came because of the opportunity to earn an easy upper-division credit. Others came to learn about drugs. And still others came to help better understand why their lives had been messed-up by drug use.

When the weekend was over, everyone had learned a little about themselves.

Leeds has been leading Impact sessions like this weekend's at the University for the past 14 months. During the program, no graphic films are shown of drug-related deaths. The actual consequences that drugs and alcohol have on the body are not discussed until the final day. Instead, Leeds said the objective of Impact is to heighten awareness of the effect drug use, or any other sort of problem, has on the lives of in-

dividuals, their families and their friends.

"Dope isn't about doing lines," he told the group. "It's about what it does to you; how it affects relationships."

Later, he added that through Impact he hopes "to raise awareness of chemical dependencies, family systems and communication skills."

"I want to empower young adults to make more responsible decisions," he said.

Leeds does this by being frankly honest with the students in Impact training. A self-described hippie, Leeds tells students about his own extensive drug experiences and of his frustration of growing up with alcoholic parents. His tendency to share intense, personal memories as well as the happier periods of his life encourages students to do the same.

"He's been there, so you don't feel like it's a doctor who's just read it in a book... He knows what you've been going through," said freshman Patty Keene.

During Impact training structured lecture takes second place to the students' own feelings on the subject at hand. Students are encouraged, but not required, to participate in discussions on such personal topics as romantic relationships, family communication, and their own

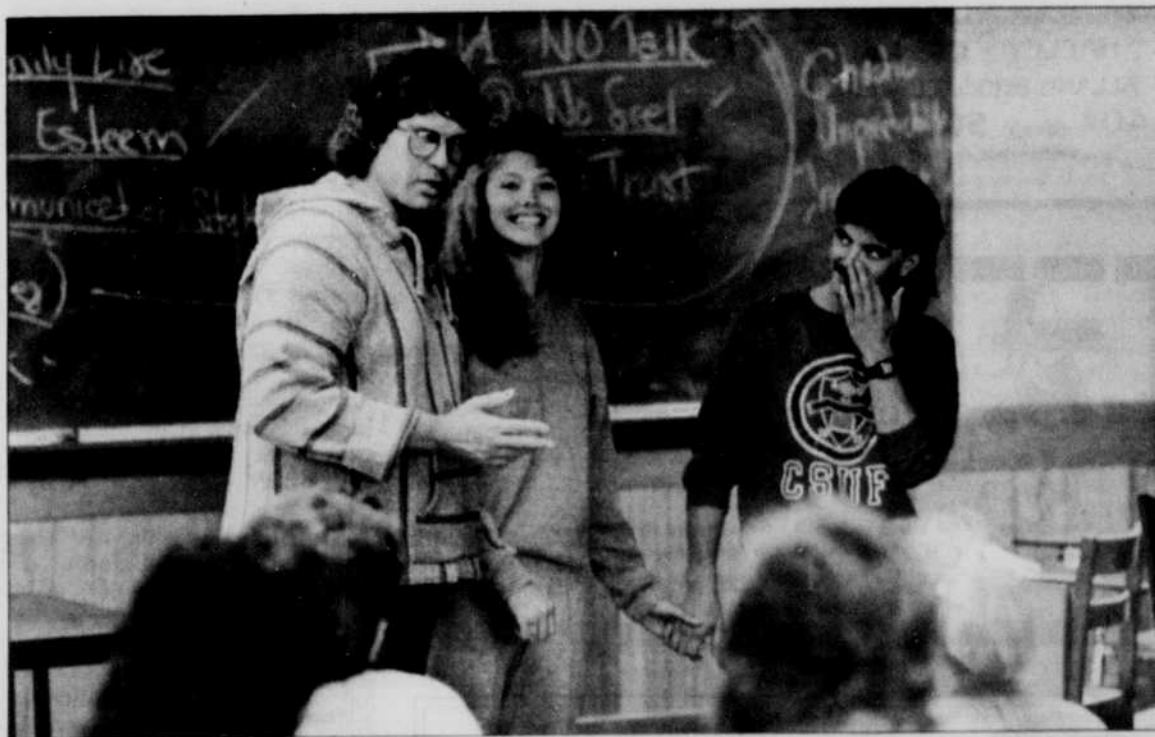


Photo by Cliff Etzel

Impact instructor Michael Leeds (left) helps heighten chemical abuse awareness.

Sponsored by the University Office of Student Affairs, the \$3,000 program was paid for out of the ASUO's incidental fees.

One upper division credit is available to students who attend all six sessions of Impact and write a three- to five-page paper on their response to the program.

drug use.

For example, on the first night the students were organized into what Leeds calls "triads." Three people formed a group and spoke to each other about various words Leeds wrote on the blackboard. The second night students were separated into slightly larger groups, where they went through another exercise called

"Color Your World" to help them get to know each other better and sharpen their communication skills.

This weekend was the first time that people from both the residence halls and the Greek system had attended an Impact training session together. In the past, Impact has been held primarily by a single fraternity or sorority.

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