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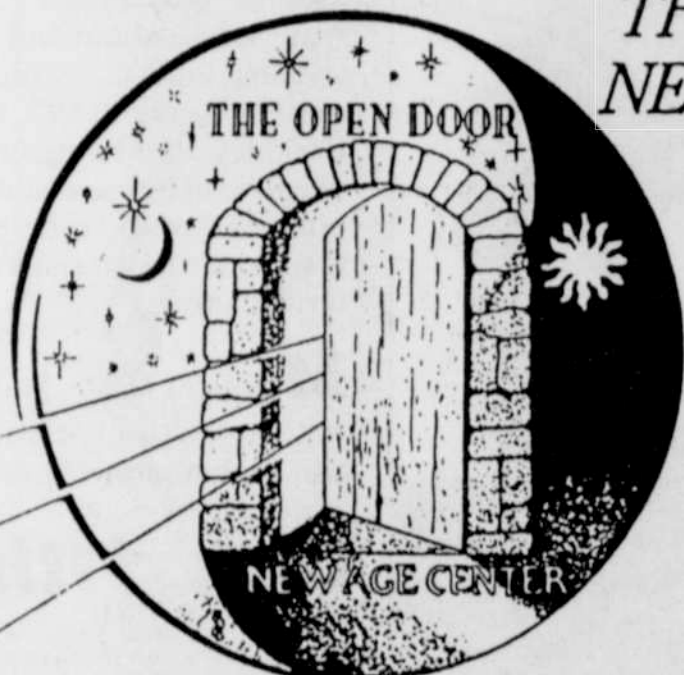
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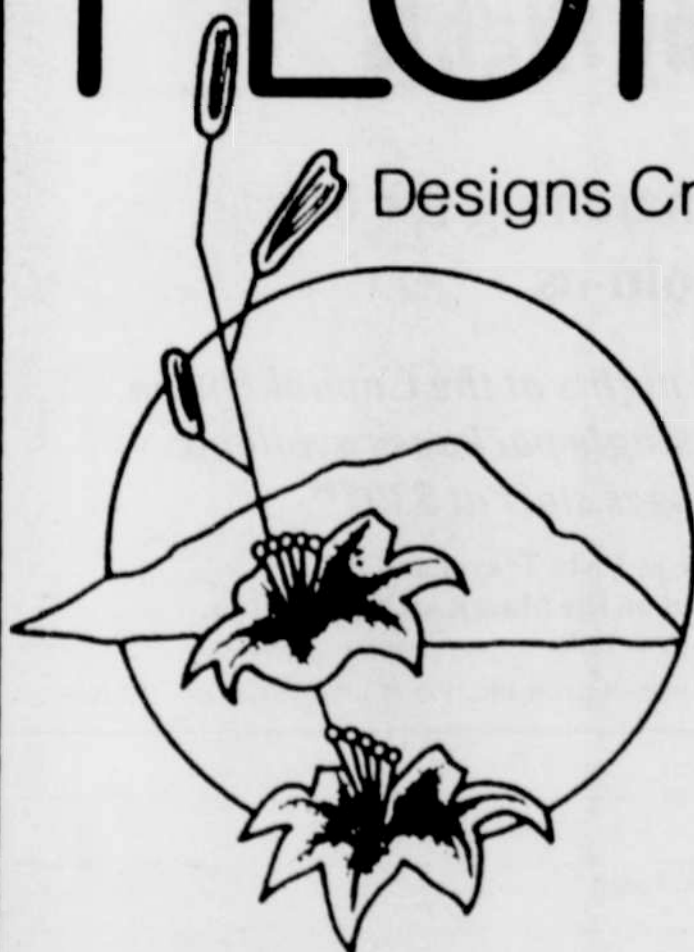
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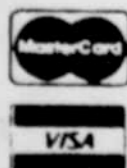
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AIDS: Facts, not fear

*AIDS may change our attitudes towards how we deal with
those who are caught in the grips of drugs.*

BY STEVEN BAILEY, N.D.

While the alarming spread of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) has stimulated increased funding and tremendous growth in the field of immunology, we have yet to discover a cure or develop a vaccine to counter the crisis. We have learned to better screen serum replacement samples to limit the number of hospital- and medical-caused transmissions of the disease, yet the disease continues to spread at a rate exceeding 100 percent annually. With this type of growth, we cannot emphasize the importance of prevention in countering the AIDS crisis.

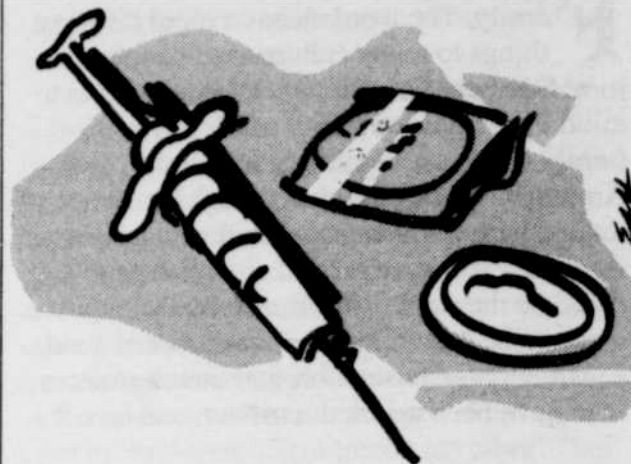
As AIDS emerged in our society, the mechanisms of spread for this sexually-transmissible disease led many to assume that homosexuality was a prerequisite for the development of AIDS. We now know that heterosexual transmission of AIDS is not only possible but, in fact, is accounting for an increasing number of AIDS cases in America. The initial predominance of homosexuals acquiring AIDS was largely due to a section of this community representing the introduction of the syndrome into America, just as a day-care center might introduce a flu to the community as a whole.

What can we do to prevent our getting AIDS?

Since it normally takes from three to five years for AIDS to show itself, the unfortunate truth is that tens to hundreds of thousands of Americans have already been exposed to the AIDS virus through heterosexual activities. Areas of higher sexual promiscuity such as night-life cultures, high schools and colleges will probably join the gay and I.V. drug populations as vectors of spread for AIDS in the not-too-distant future. Fortunately we all have the power to choose our own lifestyle and thus can dramatically decrease the chance of contacting the AIDS virus.

Outside of celibacy or a long-term monogamous relationship, the single most important tool to prevent the spread of AIDS is the condom. It is generally accepted that a condom will prevent the spread of the virus from one partner to the other.

Another major group of AIDS cases is within the I.V. drug users of this society. In fact, much of the early evidence of heterosexual transmission of AIDS was observed in spouses of I.V. drug users. While I.V. drug dependency is a sad condition in and of itself, the dangers of AIDS to the general population warrants a societal change toward this group. In particular, I believe that our government should allow those who are ill with drug dependencies to obtain sterile needles from general pharmacies. People will argue that the fear of "dirty" needles may act as a deterrent to some who might otherwise experiment with I.V. drug use. I know I can't



resolve this argument in this column, but I can comment on one aspect of our society's approach to drug use.

In the summer of the McGovern-Nixon campaign, I had a highly educational lesson in the American drug industry. At this time I had a summer job selling shoes in Lloyd Center. One of the shoe salesmen earned his major income selling marijuana, and to my utter surprise supported and voted for Nixon as McGovern's stance on decriminalizing marijuana use would deprive him of his major income. As a final note to this story, this man was arrested for possession of 600 pounds of marijuana and was back on the street within one week.

I am not advocating the use of drugs, but the current situation of criminal control, high profit and no taxes is detrimental to our society. In England where heroin users can get a "fix" for "pennies," and government regulation can prevent I.V. transmission of disease and help rehabilitate these people, there has been a minimal-to-negligible increase in drug use. The legality of heroin has not inspired more people to ruin their lives with its use, but has removed the need for the addicted to rob and victimize the innocent to the tune of \$1,000 a day, money which lines the pockets of some of the most despicable people on the planet.

Maybe with the added fear of AIDS, we will change our attitudes toward how we deal with those who are caught in the grips of drugs.

If you are an I.V. drug user, you must be aware that you can get AIDS from a shared needle, and as AIDS takes years to surface it is very difficult to know whether your friends have the AIDS virus. Likewise, if you are promiscuous, or even entering into a new monogamous relationship, the chance of contacting the AIDS virus is present. Like the sterile needle, the use of a condom in intercourse is one of the safest protections against contacting the virus.

*Dr. Bailey can be heard live on KBOO's
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