PTA told role models determine drug use

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

The concern about the use and abuse of drugs at Welches Grade School is being explored by the school's PTA through a lecture series.

The first presentation was made by a representative of the Comprehensive Options for Drug Abuse (CODA), a Portland-based organization which offers a drug-free outpatient clinic and a methadone maintenance program, as well as a residential facility.

Nikki Johnson, a counselor with CODA, told the PTA at its Jan. 13 meeting that the word drugs, "pushes every scare button we have" because it represents something unknown to a lot of parents.

She said that "you can talk to your kids until you are blue in the face," but the biggest influence will be role models and peer pressure.

She said that they may try drugs, and that there is little they, as parents, can do. Experimentation is "just the nature of the critter."

Johnson said that by the time today's kids finish high school, 70 to 80 percent will have tried drugs and 20 percent will be regular users, while five to ten percent will be chronic abusers.

Some will be recreational users only, and other will be mixing various types of drugs, including alcohol and other drugs together.

To combat continual drug use Johnson recommended that parents and teachers provide the best information possible on drugs. This will insure that the information is accurate and "doesn't come from someone selling drugs."

She said that this information should be in libraries and should be continually updated.

Students will begin experimenting when there is access, said Johnson. Generally the first introduction they will experience will be through the family medicine cabinet. Here they can experiment with valium, tranquilizers, sleeping pills and even asprin. Also, tobacco and alcohol will play an important role in the beginning of their experimentation with chemical abuse.

Johnson said that although school could be a place to acquire drugs, a lot of the students will be introduced to marijuana first through their own brothers or sisters, wo may not only have it in their possession, but also may be dealing.

She said that the situation can even become more complicated when the parents okay the use of a drug at home, with the kids then taking it to school.

A frequent sign of heavy drug use during adolescent and teen years, according to Johnson, is that a student will not develop the goals that the other students have begun setting.

Their motivation will be affected, and they will develop an "I-don't-give-a-damn attitude."

Today's drugs are more potent and their makers more sophisticated on what they put out on the street.

"It's like an American pharmaceutical company," said Johnson. "They just keep creating and inventing new forms of drugs."

Johnson said that the quality of such drugs as LSD or acid, has improved greatly, and that it still is being heavily used.

The drug can affect the user by distorting perception and making them behave in an unusual or bizzare manner. Or, one might become very quiet.

Sometimes users are content merely to sit and stare at the ceiling which, to them, could be fascinating.

One parent in the audience commented that she had been a heavy user of the drug LSD back in the sixties and as a result had "flashbacks" up to 12 years later.

Boring PTA topic is drug abuse

Dick Baker, Clackamas County sheriff's deputy, will be the guest speaker at the Boring PTA meeting tonight.

Baker will discuss drug and alcohol abuse. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Naas Cafeteria.

There will also be two speakers from Al Anon to discuss alcohol abuse. Questions will be allowed as time permits.

There are 6,000 deaths of people between the ages of 16 to 20 a year that are alcohol related, according to information provided by the PTA.

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