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Dr. Liam Callen, interim Executive Director of N/NE Mental Health Center.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

Callen Named Director of N/NE Mental Health Center

by Jerry Garner

The Board of Directors of North/Northeast Community Mental Health Center has appointed Dr. Liam Callen as Interim Executive Director. Callen is a former member of the faculty of the University of Washington, School of Public Health and Community Medicine and was director of the Medex Program. He founded the Community Health Advocate Program in Washington State.

Dr. Callen has experience in multi-ethnic program implementation and personnel development. He will be responsible for staff organization, community development and stabilization and diversification of agency funding.

According to Bobbie Nunn, Chairman of the N/NE Board of Directors, the appointment of Dr. Callen as Director is a big step in re-building the mental health center. "Dr. Callen will

provide a spirit of leadership and renewed purpose, so that the agency can resume its role in service to the N/NE community. We now have a new community board, an interim Director, a well-qualified staff and great hope for implementing an even better program in the future."

The board has been seeking a director since Dr. David Cramer, former director of N/NE was dismissed in August. Dr. Cramer and eight of the twelve board members were terminated on the recommendation of a task force commissioned by Multnomah County Executive Dennis Buchanan. The committee was appointed by the county to look into how mental health services should be continued in North and Northeast Portland. Dr. Ozodi Osuji, who has been serving as Director of N/NE since Cramer, will be assistant director of the mental health clinic.

Some Drugs May Damage Immune System

by Jerry Garner

There is frightening new evidence that some illegal and legal drugs may be weakening the human immune system.

Two studies were conducted by researchers at Tufts University and the Medical College of Virginia. The studies have linked drug use—including smoking and drinking—to decreased immunity.

Researchers at the Medical College reported that marijuana weakens the body's immune system. The Virginia researchers came to this conclusion after conducting tests on female guinea pigs.

The researchers infected the guinea pigs with the herpes simplex virus HSV-II. Guinea pigs were used because they develop herpes in a similar way to humans, and like humans, guinea pigs are prone to periods of recurring lesions. The guinea pigs were placed into two groups and one group was given a dosage of THC equal to four joints of marijuana. THC is one of the 426 chemical compounds found in marijuana. The researchers reported that this group of guinea pigs developed ulcers more rapidly and they were more severe and numerous than the control group. The Virginia researchers also found that these animals suffered two to three times the number of recurrences and each one had more lesions than the animals in the control group.

Dr. Guy Cabral, leader of the Virginia research team, states that the results of their studies indicate that THC depresses the immune system on three levels: interferon, cell-mediated immune response, and antibodies. Interferons are the body's first line of defense against virus infection. Cell-mediated immune response kills virus-infected cells and brings the infection to a halt. Antibodies neutralize a virus particle by latching onto it, thereby preventing it from infecting the body's cells.

It's estimated that over 50 million Americans smoke marijuana daily. The Tufts studies found that THC also suppresses natural killer (NK) cell activity in rat spleens, which may limit their ability to fight viruses. NK cells also seek out and destroy tumor cells, helping prevent the growth of some cancers and their spread to other parts of the body.

Not only do illegal drugs such as marijuana weaken the body's immune system, making it more susceptible to diseases, studies have shown that some legal drugs are also dangerous to the immune system. Studies have shown that alcohol and cigarettes are immuno-suppressive. Alcoholics and heavy drinkers are at greater risk of developing certain cancers, tuberculosis and respiratory tract infections. Cigarette smoking has long been associated with a variety of diseases, including chronic lung infection and various types of cancer.

For the Brothers and Sisters Who Want To Try Crack "A Message From Crack"

I am crack. I will set you free for a moment's time. Yes, I'm the luscious derivative of cocaine, this is true. It's not nice to fool with the devil's smile, but for those who want to try me, I know who you are. You're those who have the fear of accomplishments in your lives. The ones with the inner creativity, afraid to let it come forward. You are also the ones who never give yourselves a chance. A chance to believe in yourselves. Just like the prostitutes on Union Avenue, jealous of their own shadows.

So who is my next curious and naive victim, who would be king or queen for a day? Who are willing to sacrifice a great youth and future, which have not yet come to pass, by sucking away their brains until their ability to think is amputated, by pimping their instincts until they borrow, beg, rob, and even kill. All for that ironic attempt to have another hit of me. I will become your best and only friend. I will go with you wherever you go. I will be in your mind as well as your eyes, becoming you heart's desire for living. As long as you can afford me, I'll be there for you.

Remember this if you decide to try me: You will be giving me your all—materially, physically, mentally, but most of all, spiritually. Better believe me when I state: "I will be taking you all, from your last grain of self-respect to the innermost dreams you never realize. After we have had our so-called fun—and it won't be until you are penniless, malnourished, senseless, and strung out—then you will attain the ultimate realization that I have given you—NOTHINGNESS." I am crack!



Howard Parnell lights candles during Kwanzaa celebration held at the Black Education Center. Kwanzaa is a Black holiday celebration

from Dec. 28—Jan. 1.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

Happy New Year