

# Chief disputes cocaine study

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William Dwyer, Farmington Hills police chief

cent of the students who drop out of high school. Crack use among this group of students, especially inner city residents, probably is higher, Johnston said.

The low cost of crack cocaine — \$8-\$10 for a rock — is enough to ensure its continued and increased use. "The drug of choice is cocaine. The price of cocaine has decreased so much now anyone can afford it," Dwyer said.

THE STUDY, according to Johnston and HHS secretary Bowen, also shows a change in attitudes in the perceived risk of cocaine.

Dwyer agrees the public is becoming more aware of the risks of cocaine and crack because of the media's continuing public service announcements. "Right now, there's more awareness, but there's a need for more than awareness," Dwyer said.

He said he would like to see more rehabilitation centers so abusers don't have to wait months for help. He'd also like to see many more educational pre-arrests.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

# He helps kids work out problems

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"I tend to approach problems in the here and now. I try to come up with alternative behavior that lessens the strife for the kids and their families."

HIS IDEAS and attitudes for working with kids and teens come from some hefty experience.

With degree in hand, Hamilton began his career with the Oakland County Probate Court in the boys detention unit of Children's Village in Pontiac. His work at the residential facility for delinquent, abused and neglected children taught him a lot.

And we're not talking about a fresh-faced college graduate. Hamilton had served in the U.S. Air Force for two years. As he described himself, "I had been around and seen a few things."

More than anything, Hamilton was surprised by what he saw at Children's Village. "I was surprised by the vulnerability of the kids. They tend to be very tough outside and very dependent inside."

From there, he worked for 16 months as a child welfare worker in the status offender program. "It was in the crisis intervention and diversion unit that deals specifically with home truancy (runaways younger than 17)."

The next career step brought him closer to Farmington. Though headquartered in Pontiac, Hamilton served 17 months as a court caseworker for the Farmington Public Schools. "It's like a probation officer. I would recommend disposition for court cases of kids that reside in the Farmington school area and supervise the cases."

WHEN HAMILTON took the FYA job in October, he had sort of finally come home. Born, but not raised in the Farmington area, Hamilton thought that working with FYA would allow him to be more involved in the community than he was as a court caseworker.

His official job title with the probate court is child welfare worker. But he calls that "a blanket title." He prefers to explain his work by describing what FYA really does.

"FYA is a two-fold organization. It's a group of volunteers from Farmington and Farmington Hills that organizes programs and activities in areas that will hopefully prevent delinquency and neglect in the community," he said.

FYA's second function is as a counselor for children and families. "Those services include referrals to

other services in the community — mental health, substance abuse treatment and private therapy if they need that extensive kind of help."

Hamilton prefers helping children, especially teens, by helping their families. The kids he counsels are as young as 7 and as near-adulthood as 17. "Kids who come to us — referred either by police, schools or parents — don't operate in a vacuum. Their problems are not theirs alone."

HAMILTON BELIEVES it's important to involve family members when trying to help kids because everyone contributes to the problem. "I place a lot of responsibility on parents and on the child himself toward making changes."

Most of the problems he finds in kids are in their relationships at

home or at school. "Kids are faced today with more adult problems and responsibilities, in my opinion."

Twenty-five years ago, things were quite different. There's been "a lot of concentrated change" in that time span. Today, there's more drugs, more divorce, melded families — "yours, mine and ours," and single-parent families. And of course, the two-income parents have their own type of effect on children, Hamilton said.

And to those times when people say it seems like kids are getting worse, Hamilton says phooey. "It's a cycle. It's up and down. That can be a function of many things. It could be the police are placing more emphasis on juvenile crime. Or it could be the community is more aware and willing to be involved in filing complaints and testifying."

## Youth group seeks volunteers

If you're looking for a chance to give some time and effort to the community, Farmington Youth Assistance could use your help.

"There are people out there who are looking for an opportunity to give back to the community. I'd like them to give me a call," said Bill Hamilton, FYA's new caseworker, who replaces Andrea Cooley who transferred to Bloomfield Hills.

FYA is sponsored by the Oakland County Probate Court. It is financially supported by the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills and the Farmington Public Schools.

Housed in the Shilawasse Center, 30415 Shilawasse, west of Orchard Lake Road, in Farmington Hills, FYA

provides programming and counseling for kids and families. A general citizens committee decides what programming to offer. Residents who volunteer would help committee members with programs and classes.

"People can help provide programming to help the quality of life in the community," Hamilton said. "There is a vicarious reward in that you are giving back to the community."

"Certainly, we want people interested in improving the community. We also want people who are good organizers and people interested in doing publicity," Hamilton continued.

Residents interested in volunteering may call Hamilton at 476-3840.

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