

## Suburban Life

Loraine McClellan editor/477-5450



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# A 'Mr. Tough Guy' goes Straight

## Teen discovers a new way of life

By Loraine McClellan  
staff writer

**B**RUCE GOINS is dividing his time these days between classes at North Farmington High School, swim practice, his Farmington Hills home and Straight, where he is in treatment for drug abuse.

The 17-year-old wryly admits that his current lifestyle, in some respects, is similar to living under house arrest. He makes little to no decisions about how his time is spent. He needs written permission to vary the schedule for even an hour.

But step by step, he is given larger amounts of responsibility, working toward his graduation from Straight, when he will hopefully be equipped with the wherewithal to face a future without drugs.

He refers to himself as "Mr. Tough Guy," or "a wild and crazy man," when he speaks of his life before entering the long-term therapy in Straight last June.

Today, he says "I'm learning how to have a good time." Before, his good times used to be more costly and hardly enriching.

"I'd get the money, then get the alcohol, then get drunk, then get paranoid and start watching the clock because I had to sober up before I got home. Then I'd feel guilty — or ashamed of some of the outrageous behavior. Then, in order to deal with the embarrassment I'd get high again."

"It wasn't fun. It was boring and scary."

WHAT GOINS describes is the vicious cycle Straight finds common in the 12- to 20-year-olds who come for help to the Plymouth-based facility.

When Goins uses the word "drugs," he is talking about the entire gamut of abused substances, including alcohol. His "druggie friends" are those who use (or used) any of the substances, sometimes in combination.

"My choice just happened to be alcohol. It was no trouble to buy. I was buying it, or getting it, since I was 12. Last year in school, all I had were druggie friends. Coming back to school was hard. I think it was a week before I even talked to anybody. Now, I have one straight friend," he said.

Goins is in phase 4 of the five-

*'Last year in school, all I had were druggie friends. Coming back to school was hard. I think it was a week before I even talked to anybody. Now I have one straight friend.'*

— Bruce Goins  
Farmington Hills

phase therapy.

"Graduation day will come when it comes," he said. "I'll be here for as long as it takes."

In phase 1, teens are removed from their own home and school. They live in foster homes, attend school at Straight and receive intensive counseling there.

In phase 2, they return home, where the rebuilding of the family takes place under Straight guidelines; therapy is provided for the entire family.

IN PHASE 3, they are sent back to their own school. Getting an afternoon or weekend job is encouraged. The staff at Straight believes it has at least one of its teens placed in every fast-food restaurant along Ann Arbor Road.

In phase 4, the teens begin to deal on their own with the pressures of the day — one pressure and one day at a time. Intense therapy continues. So does the "house arrest" status. The staff knows where every one of its 80 teens are every minute of the day.

In phase 5, the teens are allowed days off. They're challenged with finding new friendships and new activities.

When Goins reaches Phase 5, he will also join Alcoholics Anonymous.

While Goins was living in a foster home, his parents, Gene and Sue Goins, were becoming licensed foster parents to take other teens in Straight into their home.

Living in the same house with the newcomers to Straight, Goins said, has given him the only responsibility he says he can remember in life where he felt really committed.

"They can't fool me. I've been there," he said. "I know about the yelling and the pouting and the slam-



GILL DRESSLER/staff photographer

Bruce Goins, a 17-year-old senior at North Farmington High School, talks about his life when it was centered around the next wild party, and his life at Straight, where he is in treatment as a recovering alcoholic.

ming doors. I know about the I-don't-care image and the excuses: the teacher hates me, the dog ate my homework."

"I know about the violence and the anger feelings and the mood swings. I know that we all, somewhere along the line, just never got around to learning how to share our feelings."

There was a time in his life, Goins said, "when I had to do more and more crazy stuff to get a good feeling. A lot of that came from calculated risks; look at my driving record. I was so insecure, and I thought it was fun. Everything was centered around the next wild party."

Goins is not giving much thought now to college or a career.

"I'm still forgiving myself for some of the stupid things. But mostly I'm living just for today, just one day at a time."

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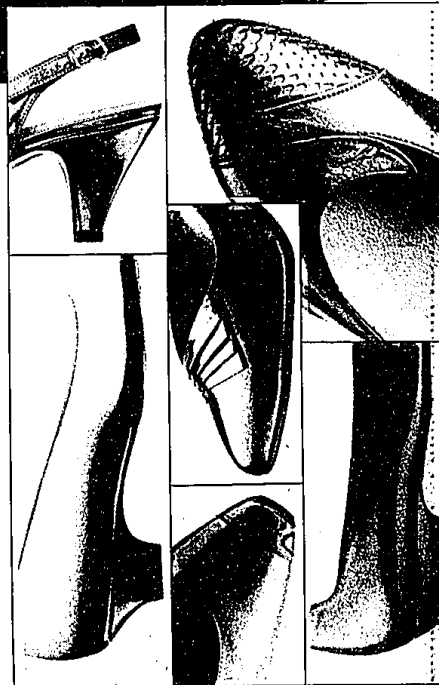
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*'The first time we heard Bruce say 'I am a druggie,' my husband cried. I felt nothing but relief. I was relieved because it was the first glimmer of hope that we were finally going to get some help.'*

Sue Goins  
Farmington Hills



## Family in therapy

### Parents recover from 'life of lunacy'

By Loraine McClellan  
staff writer

When Sue Goins' youngest child was winding up his junior year in high school, she thought her child-rearing days were nearing an end. But by the time he was a senior, she was foster mother to a houseful of teenagers.

"I have five now and have been told I'll have another one next week," she said.

The teens have been removed from their own homes and schools in the first phase of drug rehabilitation through Straight.

Her role as house mother is a requirement of her son's treatment in the Plymouth-based program, which boasts a 70 percent success rate.

"We have our ups and downs," she said of the teens who have come and gone since last fall. "Some days, the energy here is so high you can feel it. Some days are down in the pits. But even on the down days, I can see the progress. I see some of them opening up, blossoming like flowers."

The house is run strictly according to Straight guidelines. In many respects, the parents of the recovering teens are held to rules as rigid as those laid down for those in treat-

ment, while each works their way back from what Goins called "a life of lunacy."

THERAPY FOR teens and their families runs parallel.

"This week, we're attending classes in how to be rational. The teens will be attending eight classes. The parents must attend three," Goins said.

Sue and Gene Goins' "life of lunacy" paralleled that of their 17-year-old son, Bruce, even though Bruce was drinking long before his parents

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