

Activist skeptical of drug awareness group

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington area anti-substance abuse activist Betty Nicolay is skeptical about a national foundation that's asking suburban residents for money to fight substance abuse.

"I doubt their legitimacy. I can't say they aren't legitimate. But I would recommend that residents not send money to them," said Nicolay, board chairwoman of Farmington Families in Action. "We don't know much about them. You don't know where the money is going."

Nicolay joins other Oakland County drug awareness group members who are skeptical of the National Awareness Foundation and its workbook, "All Hugs No Drugs."

The workbook's aim is to encourage straight talk between children and their parents about drug and alcohol abuse.

Even the East Coast founder of the National Awareness Foundation, which prints the free workbook, said exaggerated claims of endorsement

may have contributed to the rocky start in Oakland County.

Ruth Harris, founder and staff writer, said the foundation has printed and distributed almost a quarter of a million workbooks since 1986.

For about a month, the foundation has operated a phone bank in Southfield, calling homes in Birmingham, Southfield, Troy, Farmington Hills and other areas seeking money. The foundation has an office in Southfield.

PATRONS GET their names listed in the workbook, which is to be printed in May or June. Businesses are also asked to buy advertisements.

Two of the calls went to members of area Families in Action groups, which work toward drug education and prevention. They were called at home and they were skeptical.

"I asked, 'How come I've never heard of you?'" said Corolla Dwyer, of the Birmingham Bloomfield Families in Action. She did not send money.

Nicolay said she doesn't know if Farmington-area residents have been receiving calls from the National Awareness Foundation.

After checking out the foundation, Nicolay said she found the organization didn't register with the federally funded Parent Resource Institute on Drug Education, which most drug awareness programs work through. The National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth also knew nothing of the foundation.

Nicolay also said the state office of Families in Action in Birmingham asked the National Awareness Foundation for information about the group. "They didn't get it," she said.

THE METHOD of operation also

bothered Audrey Berger, a member of the Southfield/Lathrup Families in Action, although the caller did offer her the opportunity to come to the Southfield office and see the workbook, she said.

Berger said she was sent a "generic" solicitation letter asking for \$10. "I thought it was real loose, and that it was money they were after," Berger said.

The non-profit foundation is a corporation "in good standing" in Delaware, according to that state's attorney general's office. It is not incorporated in Michigan, where such a status is optional.

Heidi Bartlett, supervisor of the Michigan Attorney General's Charitable Trust Division, said she has no

record of the National Awareness Foundation. Non-profit organizations required to be licensed if they solicit or anticipate gathering \$8,000 within a year.

The foundation's regional manager, Darrell Nelson, said the group is not a charity and he sent in a questionnaire to the state almost two weeks ago.

IN THE first 30 days, Nelson said the callers had received about \$3,000 in pledges from patrons and advertisers. They don't take donations, he stressed, and they are not a charity.

Health officials are gun-shy about unknown groups calling to raise money for drug and alcohol abuse

because the cause is so inviting. "I personally would not be inclined to support this type of program because they are not licensed. I would be suspicious of them," said Kalvin Engelberg of the Oakland County Health Department's health education and intervention division.

The "All Hugs, No Drugs" workbook is for children from grades 2 to 6 to take home and complete with their families. It features 40 pages of word searches, Dear Abby-style questions for children to answer, fill-in-the-blank surveys, quizzes and drawings they can sketch.

Staff writers Dave Varpa and Tim Smith contributed to this story.

Man hospitalized after 2-car accident

A 48-year-old Farmington Hills man, who witnesses say drove through a red stop light, was seriously injured Tuesday morning in a two-car collision at the intersection of Inkster and 10 Mile, Southfield public information officer Gary Conat said.

The man is hospitalized in serious

condition at Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills.

Two others received minor injuries in the 6:30 a.m. accident, which closed 10 Mile between Inkster and Beech for an hour. Conat said the road was closed to allow police to complete an investigation of the ac-

cident scene.

The car driven northbound on Inkster by the Farmington Hills man collided with one driven eastbound on 10 Mile by a 28-year-old Farmington Hills woman, police said.

CONAT SAID the front end of the

woman's car apparently hit the northbound car at the driver's side.

Although she was not injured, two passengers in her car were, Conat said. A 39-year-old Farmington Hills man and 34-year-old Farmington Hills woman sought their own medical treatment, he said.

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