

New war on drugs gives activists hope

By C. L. Rugenstein
staff writer

It's a good start, but is it enough? While many politicians criticized President George Bush's aggressive new strategy against drugs in America saying not enough money was allocated for prevention, education and treatment, many Oakland County people on the front lines of the drug war called it an excellent first step.

The \$7.8 billion total cost for the program, "is incomprehensible" to most ordinary people, said Patricia Stanton, vice president of education for Birmingham/Bloomfield Families in Action. "You can't put a dollar value on fighting drugs," Stanton said.

To Stanton, the most valuable aspect of the televised speech was the power behind it — that the president saying drugs is the number one problem in America gave the program impetus.

"It unites people in the country and in our communities aware," she

said. "Anyone who was listening to it can't think drugs is not a problem any more."

WILLIAM DWYER, police chief for Farmington Hills, thinks a national attack on the problem is "way overdue."

"It should have been done years ago," said Dwyer, who first fought drugs as a 23-year veteran of the Detroit police force before joining the Farmington department.

"My only problem with the president's strategy is the money being sent to Colombia (Peru and Bolivia to put the suppliers out of business)," Dwyer said. "It has to be monitored in the way it's disseminated and accounted for, by a drug enforcement agency." Otherwise Dwyer feels, there's too much opportunity for corruption of judges and law enforcement officials in the drug-supplying countries.

But like a lot of the president's congressional critics, Dwyer also feels not enough money was allocated for education.

"If we're ever going to make it work, the impact will be in the area of education," he said. "We have to start in the home, with kids 5 and 6 years old. If we wait till they get to high school, we've lost them."

DR. MICHAEL BOYLE, medical director at the Maple Grove treatment facility for adult and adolescent chemical dependency in West Bloomfield, would like to see a flexibility in the way funds are allocated for each part of the program.

"I do feel education, prevention and treatment dollars are a lot cheaper than those spent to prevent the supply from entering the country," Boyle said referring to the 70-percent of the 7.8 billion slated for law enforcement.

"I hope the program has enough flexibility to take from one fund and shift to another if we see that a positive benefit could be had by the shift," Boyle said.

If for instance research showed that educational or prevention programs decreased drug use, funds

could possibly be shifted from the law enforcement fund.

But, said Boyle, "I don't know if there's enough money in the world to do all that. The problem is ubiquitous — like eating an elephant. You have to eat it one bite at a time."

The President's strategy is a beginning, Boyle said.

BUT WHILE Judge Stephen Cooper of Southfield's 46th District Court is "absolutely" for more spending on law enforcement and interdiction, he's also absolutely for total community involvement and education.

"The only way for a war to be successful is to get more enlistees," he said. "It has to be fought in every home and family. You can't have the president waving an \$8 million check and believe the problem's going to go away."

Families have to be educated about how drug addiction occurs, and that a drug abuser can be addicted to more than one substance, Cooper said. "Education is a key, but the biggest key is to get everyone in-

involved," he added.

Cooper noted a proposal made this past weekend by Michigan's coordinator of drug agencies, Donald L. Riesig as a step in the right direction: Riesig proposed a user fee of \$500 for anyone convicted of using a controlled substance. The money from the fees would go into the state's war on drugs.

"If the user is the one creating the culture that's costing us all this money, let the user pay for it," Cooper said.

MAXINE SAAD, president of Birmingham/Bloomfield Families in Action was also encouraged by the President's stress on cooperation at all levels. "I liked what he said about collaboration and cooperation," Saad said. "That's what was missing before."

She would also like to see more money spent on treatment and rehabilitation. "That's something that should be done on the local level," Saad said. "We can't go after the big guns in Colombia, but we can work with people locally."

Dennis Tiganelli, who deals with substance abuse problems at Rochester Adams High School, agrees.

"It's our first real hope — that the President sees the need for a comprehensive type of program. It will only be a help for us," Tiganelli said.

There was also a great need for a "good humanistic program at the middle school level, before they go off in that direction" (of drugs).

Substance abuse programs in the work place will also be helped by the president's aggressive program.

"I applaud the president's initiative," said Thomas McDonald, director of Central Public Relations for Troy-based Volkswagen of America. Volkswagen's prevention and treatment program for employees has been in place for more than a year, doing "whatever is necessary, to see employees are fully aware and fully covered if they ever need counseling or assistance," McDonald said.

"Public awareness is very important to the whole process," he said.

To be safe or not to be safe is issue for college theater

By C. L. Rugenstein
staff writer

To play it safe or be adventurous? That's the dilemma planners at university and regional theaters face every year in choosing productions for the upcoming season.

Adventurous won out for Meadow Brook Theater.

In breaking with the safe and satisfied mode of doing only well-known plays or well-known authors, Meadow Brook, part of Oakland University, will be presenting five plays that have never been produced in this area before — and at least two have topical themes.

They're taking a chance with the five plays — "The Boys Next Door," "A Walk in the Woods," "Diary of a Souse," "The Great Sebastians," and "The Immigrant," — said Terence Kilburn, Meadow Brook's artistic director.

"We've always tried to do a certain number of new plays in the past," Kilburn said. "Not as many as this time, but times change, and audiences change, and we figured the time was right."

Though change is always a risk when audiences come to expect a certain kind of programming, reactions from some season ticket holders have been favorable, according to Meadow Brook's associate director Jim Spittle.

"A LOT of people have been saying, 'Try some more adventuresome, more relevant shows,'" Spittle said. On the other hand, "Others have said we're doing shows they've never heard of."

But money is the bottom line in most instances since taking a risk with programming affects profits.

"Subscriptions are down," Spittle said, "but we hope to make it up in single ticket sales."

Then too, "No one expects a regional theater to make a profit," said Kilburn, though it does have to be self-supporting to a certain extent.

Meadow Brook, a cultural institution of Oakland University, has paid 80-85 percent of its own way for the last 20 years, Kilburn said. The rest comes from grants and private gifts.

ON THAT BASIS university theaters like Wayne State's Bonstelle and Hilberry, and the University of Detroit's theater can afford to try new things.

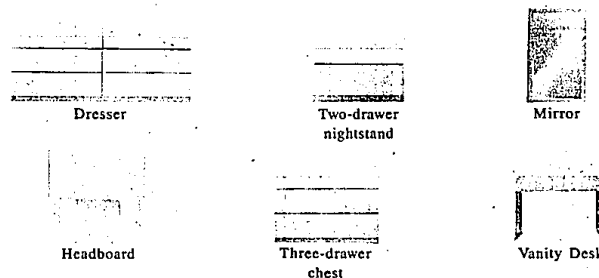
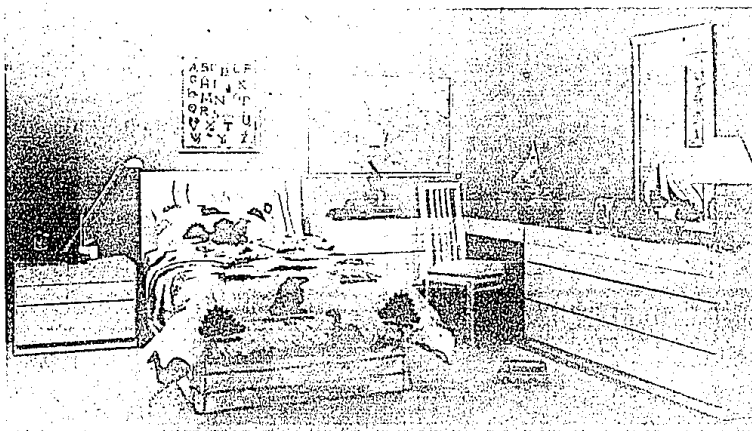
And sometimes the biggest gambles are the biggest hits, like the play "Two" by Ron Elissa at U-D theater last year.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Meadow Brook director Terence Kilburn and costume assistant Barbara Jenks laugh over a costume consideration for "Diary of a Souse," opening Oct. 5.

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