

# When does social drinking become alcoholism?



By Janice Brunson  
staff writer

Nine men, social drinkers drawn together by a common concern about their alcohol use, recently spent a trying weekend together confronting drinking patterns that are creating serious personal problems.

Among them was Rusty, a natty, church-going yuppie from Southfield, Carl, a successful, middle-aged businessman, Kevin, a Farmington Hills lad with a history of mental illness and substance abuse, and Brian, a witty Troy sales agent who arrived at an introductory meeting the Thursday before smelling suspiciously of alcohol.

The weekend, a unique overnight program conceived by two 48th District Court judges and implemented in a hospital setting a year ago by the Maple Grove Treatment Center in West Bloomfield, assists drinkers in assessing whether they are carrying social use to excess or have crossed the fine line into early alcoholism.

"Everyone here is not chemically dependent. But everyone here has suffered negative consequences as a result of mind altering substances.

You're at a fork in the road," Maple Grove counselor Larry Campbell said on day one of the encounter.

For some 40 hours, Campbell and Maple Grove colleague Chuck Coyne combined personal experience as recovering alcoholics with lectures, videos and group discussion to guide Rusty and the others to enhanced personal awareness. Each compiled a "personal assessment," shared later with the others.

"IT'S LIKE I'M on a mission to destroy myself," said Lincoln, in explaining his need for the program. A Detroit laborer from Louisiana who is considering returning to the south, Lincoln was sentenced to the program following a third drunk driving conviction.

Five of those present have three convictions each. In addition to Lincoln, there is Rusty and Brian, Victor, a former Olympic racer who nine years ago came to the United States from eastern Europe, and Paul, a Southfield insurance supervisor who once spent nine days in the Oakland County jail after a second DUI.

Amal, a personable 24-year-old grocer from Southfield who speaks

excellent English, has two convictions and Jerry, resentful of his harsh sentence, has one. Convicted in an Oakland County Court, Jerry was sentenced to the program, fined \$850, placed on probation for one year and lost his driving license for six months.

"There were extenuating circumstances," he complained. His father had died the week before. Still, Jerry consumes a six-pack daily and experiences blackouts and mood swings.

Kevin, who during high school spent 18 months in a facility for troubled youth, was sentenced to the program for underage possession of beer. He is now 21.

Only Carl, who confided he weekly consumes up to five quarts of vodka and who fears losing his job and a female companion, attended by choice.

"I'm putting my personal relationships at risk. If I don't get help, I know the problem will escalate. I need professional help," Carl said.

OF THE 200 OR SO men and women who have completed the course to date, 90 percent have been

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## Watching for signs of chemical abuse

Behavioral Symptoms of Early Addiction:

- Rationalizing amounts of drinking.
- Blaming others for excessive drinking.
- Playing down amount.
- Aggressive behavior.
- Mood swings.
- Denial.
- Camouflaging use.
- Preoccupation with drinking.
- Lie to accommodate drinking schedule.
- Continued drinking despite negative consequences.
- Sense of lost control.
- Increased tolerance.
- Increased use.
- Going to great lengths to avoid detection.
- Arrested less often than social users.

- Sneaks drinks.
- Drinks for effects.
- Uncontrollable need to get high.
- Tries to convince others there is no problem.
- Quits for brief periods but can't stay stopped.
- Job symbolizes control.
- Such symptoms as negative attitude, errors in judgement and loss of job productivity become more apparent.
- Changes drinking patterns, time and place of drinking and type of liquor.

- Moves.
- Attempts to avoid emotional pain by drinking more.
- Great self hatred.
- Terrible loneliness.
- Depression.
- Financial, marital and emotional problems.
- Sense that life is unmanageable.

Based on the film "Friday Night: Five" by Gerald T. Rogers.

Behavioral Symptoms of Middle-Stage Addiction:

- Tolerance increases considerably.
- Becomes dependent on alcohol.

## MADD tells its tale of sadness

"My little brother Steve was killed a year ago by a drunk driver."

So began Terese Vietto's terse and emotional delivery before a small group of participants in the Maple Grove Alternatives Program for convicted drunk drivers and others interested or otherwise in need of such a program.

Steven Slowik was a 17-year-old high school senior when he was killed during the late afternoon of Feb. 3, 1989. The car he was driving was struck head-on by a pickup truck driven by a 32-year-old father of four who has since been convicted of negligent homicide and sentenced to six months in jail, five years probation and 100 hours community service.

"Steven had come home from school and then went out with friends. He picked up a buddy, stopped at a yield sign and gas hit 300 feet later. That was the end of Steven," said Vietto, with a catch in her voice.

Vietto was accompanied by mother Margaret Slowik and brother Tim, 15, a look-alike to the photo of older brother Steve the family passed about the small audience.

The family is a member of the Wayne County chapter of Mother's Against Drunk Driving and, as such, regularly speaks publicly on the subject of drinking and driving.

"BECAUSE OF THE negligence of someone else, my brother paid with his life. We were a close family. We're all paying for it and it's not getting easier. We're messed up bad. I get out of bed in the morning and it's a beautiful day. But not for me, not for Steve. He's not here," Vietto said.

"It's so hard to see someone so full of life, to see them dead. We didn't get to say we love you one more time. We didn't get to say goodbye. It's a hard thing to come to grips with."

"Steve will never get a (school) diploma. He'll never go to the prom. Steve was robbed of his life. He was an innocent victim."

Vietto, Tim, brother Kevin, 21, and sisters Suzanne, 25, and Maureen Larson, 23, served as Steve's pall bearers. "We carried him down the aisle of a church in his coffin."

In response to a question, Vietto said she does not believe the driver who killed Steve received a severe enough sentence.

"He should have gotten life. Murder is murder. He had free will. "My advice is stay at home and drink. Get a designated driver. You can have fun without drinking."

For more information about MADD, in Wayne County call 422-6233, in Oakland County, 683-0270.

His parents felt it was time he had a place of his own. After all, he was 15.



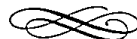
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## BEAUTY & CANCER SEMINAR



Thursday, March 8  
6:30 p.m. Dessert Reception  
7:00 p.m. Seminar  
Detroit Golf Club  
17911 Hamilton  
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Many women, diagnosed and treated for cancer, may feel distressed by the effects of treatment on their physical appearance. Our seminar will present positive approaches to counteracting the negative side effects of therapy.

Guest speaker Diane Doan Noyes  
Ms. Noyes' personal experience with the side effects of chemotherapy inspired her to write the insightful book, "Beauty and Cancer: A Woman's Guide to Looking Great While Experiencing the Side Effects of Cancer Therapy."

This seminar is designed to give you new perspectives and insights, as well as practical guidelines for looking and feeling well. There is no charge for the seminar, but please call for reservations.



R.S.V.P. to (313) 443-6328, by March 5.  
Our Beauty & Cancer Seminar is supported by Dermablend, Flori Roberts, Elizabeth Arden, Eva Gabor Wigs, Airway, Nearly Me, Nature Nook and FYI® Wardrobe and Shopping Service. With special thanks to

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