

Teens do drugs around clock

By Tim Smith
and Darrell Clom
staff writers

In the early morning hours outside his school, Bill lights up a marijuana joint and then heads for class in a slightly altered mental state.

"Wake and bake," Bill said. "That's what we call it."

Also "tripping" before school is Southfield student Steve, who'd drop mescaline — then drop into his first hour class. "I couldn't comprehend anything," he said.

But some Oakland County teens are smoking pot and doing other drugs almost around the clock, consuming them wherever and whenever they can.

"Go out at lunch, get stoned and come back," said Rick, a Birmingham Seaborn student. He was standing with a Friday night crowd of friends in front of a Maple Road eatery.

ACCORDING TO Rick, more than 60 percent of students at his school have tried pot at least once. That estimate is much steeper than that generally given by surveys of other party-minded teenagers across the county.

What most are saying:

• A third of the teenagers from Rochester to Southfield and from West Bloomfield to Birmingham have at least dabbled in the drug scene.

• At the top of their list is marijuana, followed by cocaine and various hallucinogens, such as mushrooms and acid. Alcohol use is heavy.

• They're doing them in shopping mall arcades, in cars, at house parties, on the street, in parks and around school, particularly during evening sporting events.

• Their drug source isn't necessarily Detroit. Teens have plenty of suburban drug connections — students with beepers, neighborhood dealers, dipping into their parents' stash.

THAT SCENARIO was based on talks with teens in the parking lot of a 7-Eleven store in Orchard Lake Village, on a sidewalk in front of Little Caesars in Birmingham and outside Jamba, a teen-only club a short walk from the Rochester border.

Others talked about the topic outside the laser light show at Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills, the Holladay Waterford and at high schools in Southfield and West Bloomfield.

"A lot of it (drug use) goes on in cars," said West Bloomfield resident Donald, 20, outside the 7-Eleven. "In the winter time, throw a case in the back seat, get a couple of joints and drive from party to party."

Donald said he started "partying" as a high school junior, mostly at house parties. Although he pegs 35 percent to 45 percent of the teen population as trying drugs at least once, they are discreet about it.

"You might see someone smoking a joint out in the open," Donald said. "But you never see anybody doing coke. That's all 'back room' stuff. Mushrooms aren't that easy to get."

But just about everything else is, he noted.

"IT'S OUT THERE, you can find it," said Donald, who knew of at least 20 classmates who use cocaine, also commonly referred to as "white" and "snow."

"A lot of people are ready to do it with you," he said.

Acid can be easily found for as cheap as \$3 a "hit," area teens said. Its low price and availability

are expected to make it a popular drug.

"Buying pot is like going to the corner market," said a 20-year-old rock musician attending a laser light show at Cranbrook.

Some teens who have after-school jobs buy drugs in the workplace.

"I worked at an arcade for four years," said one Southfield student, "and that's where I bought all my drugs. I never went out of Southfield to buy drugs."

WHILE MOST teens use money from their parents to buy drugs, others have different means.

Some sell drugs to support their own habits, and one teen has written personal checks on his father's bank account. One Southfield high school senior, who first smoked pot when he was 9, said he has spent up to \$1,000 a month for drugs.

"I don't go and spend a bunch of money," said Ron, another Southfield student. "I know who to talk to and the right people to smoke it with. I've blown \$140 in one night, but not on a regular basis."

Bill, meanwhile, said drug dealers are easy to spot because of the beepers they sometimes wear. "You know who's dealing. They'll blow a 'doo' with you and say, 'If you ever need anything, beep me.'"

Other teens sell drugs not only to support their habits, but also to have money for clothes, stereos and to help pay for cars. Jimmy, one of Ron's classmates, has sold such drugs as pot, cocaine, marijuana and mushrooms, sometimes earning hundreds of dollars a week.

AT SCHOOLS, word of drug connections spreads quickly, said Robert, a 19-year-old West Bloomfield teen. "You just know where to go," he said. "There's a group of stoners in every class."

After school, police officers patrol the parking lots of teen clubs, convenience stores and other hangouts, but teens find covert ways to buy and sell drugs. At Jamba, purses and coats are checked by door guards in an attempt to keep the club drug-free.

"THERE ARE more drugs in the schools than there are here," one guard said. But some students claim that in-school drug use has declined.

House parties, however, appear to be the most popular place for drug use when parents are away or before they come home from work.

"That's about all there is to do here" in the West Bloomfield Township area, said Joe, 19, about 8 p.m. on a Friday.

An hour later, a swarm of teens, who said they were on their way to house parties, formed a line of cars and sped from the parking lot of West Bloomfield High School, where they had been attending a basketball game.

Chances are, wherever they were going, parents would be nowhere around — leaving them ample opportunity to delve into the drug scene that they entered for various reasons.

SOME OF THOSE reasons include peer pressure, boredom, difficulty in coping with problems, a desire to seek new thrills and because they have seen their parents use drugs, teens said.

"You see it at home, you see (parents) smoking pot and you see them drinking," Ron said.

But other teens don't blame their parents' habits for their own. Instead, they see taking drugs as a game they play every chance they get.

"When parents work, you have two, three, four hours by yourself," one teen said. "You can really get fucked up."



In the shadow of prestigious Birmingham homes, under the Adams street train bridge, the wall of a viaduct reflects a thought added to on a daily basis, is peppered with thoughts about drugs, music and life in the '90s.

Younger kids appear to heed 'Don't do drugs'

By Jay M. Grossman
staff writer

David left behind a number of things when he moved from Detroit to Southfield a few years back. One of them was friends. The other was drugs.

"There was a lot of pressure to do drugs," said David, a fifth-grader at Vandenberg Elementary School. "Friends would give it to you free the first time until you became an addict, and then they'd sell it."

But David, who said he's never tried drugs, doesn't see that same kind of problem existing at Vandenberg.

"I've seen older kids getting high at the park," said David, referring to Sims Park, roughly three blocks away from Vandenberg. "But we know better around here. We know what it does to you."

Like sex education and AIDS, drugs has never been an easy topic for teachers to discuss — especially in the elementary schools.

"They tell us it's bad for us and something we should stay away from," said Cassandra, a fifth-grader at Barnard Elementary School in Troy. "But nobody's ever asked me if I knew anyone who did it."

CASSANDRA AND other students at the Troy Boys and Girls

everyone later on said he did some drugs."

Last year a Van Hoesen student overdosed on LSD. Laura, who said she knew the student, thinks the incident was "overblown" by the media and gave the school a bad name it didn't deserve.

"I don't even think he knew what he was taking," she said, "and even if he did, it wasn't like the whole school did it."

DR. HELENE MILLS, principal at Derby Middle School in Birmingham, also wonders how prevalent the suburban drug problem really is.

Like Laura, Dr. Mills believes a few "isolated incidents" have been taken out of perspective with negative results.

"You're just not going to find a 10-year-old selling crack around here," said Mills. "Students here are oriented toward success — they know they have something to work for."

Less than a hundred yards from Derby is a set of railroad tracks with a cement bridge stretching overhead. The bridge, plastered in a mural of brightly colored graffiti, is reportedly a hangout where Derby students go to get high.

But on a number of visits — at different times of the day — the tracks were deserted. Students crossed over the bridge, but no one went under it.

The graffiti itself is a canvas of words and images that over and over pay homage to the joys of drugs. In neon shades of spray paint, references are made to cocaine, weed, PCP and LSD.

But after the fifth day of surveillance, of crouching behind trees and bushes and stacks of railroad ties, one left the area with a feeling that just maybe the words were written — and read — by a different class of students.

Coke o Target: afflu

By Alice Collins
staff writer

She could be a college student, an office worker or a young attorney in her first year on the job.

This neat, fresh-looking, intelligent young woman with bright eyes and quick sense of humor gives no clue to the fact that she's a courier of cocaine.

Or that she's stashing away "big money" until she has enough "to move out of Michigan, buy a boat and enjoy life."

Jade, a name she picked to use for this interview to protect her identity, is in her 20s and lives and holds a "normal daytime job" in south Oakland County.

Her after-hours job as a drug courier takes her to the homes of affluent business executives, lawyers, doctors and others who live in the quiet, upper class neighborhoods of Birmingham, the Bloomfields and surrounding communities. Jade also delivers cocaine from here to other parts of the state.

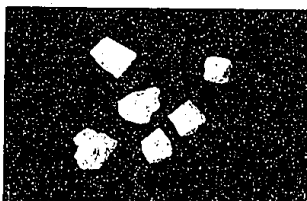
THE OUTSTATE deliveries are much less risky and more lucrative because there are very few people involved in the transaction and the size of the delivery is larger. "I make these deliveries more often, but I do get called to supply private parties here."

"My boss will call and say, 'John's having a big party for big people and they need party favors.' I really hate doing the parties because it's usually less than an ounce and you never know who's



COCAINE

is the county's drug of choice, according to law enforcement officials. Once considered a drug available only to the affluent due to its high cost, it now is commonly seen on the street, even at its current price of \$110 per gram. Today's cocaine also is much more pure — and potent — than it was a decade ago, say those who chemically test the drug in the lab.



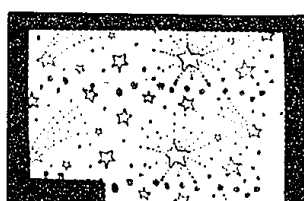
CRACK

which in layman's terms is cocaine distilled and solidified into small chunks, called rocks, is extremely addictive. While it hasn't made strong inroads into the county, it can be found for anywhere between \$5 and \$15 per rock. Crack is smoked and the effects last only about 20 or 30 minutes. However, during that time it also can cause seizures, heart arrest or other extreme physical failures.



MARIJUANA

is one of the more controversial drugs available in the county. Some say it's very harmful and leads to other drug use; others say that's wrong and insist it's safer than alcohol or cigarettes. Regardless, after cocaine, marijuana is the most popular drug in the county and sells for anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,400 per pound. It's a favorite among "wake and bake" students.



LSD

is making a comeback. Originally brought to notoriety by Timothy Leary on college campuses during the '60s, lysergic acid is a strong hallucinogenic that today is available in some of the county's grade schools. It used to be sold as a tablet; LSD is now sold in the form of decorated paper squares soaked with the drug. Each square sells for about \$3.