

POINTS OF VIEW

Changing policies may be saving college lives

It was nice to catch up with Eric Worley. Worley, a Michigan State University senior from West Bloomfield, recently returned to the area to talk about his past addiction to drugs and alcohol.

About 50 students from the three Farmington high schools heard Worley say that his first drink in eighth grade led to daily marijuana use, and finally to a daily cocaine habit as a junior in high school.

Friends finally told school officials and saved his life, he said.

Seven weeks in a rehabilitation program worked for Worley. But he's one of the lucky ones. According to available figures, about a third of young people in drug rehabilitation go back to drugs, a third die and another third are alive and sober.

It had been four years since I'd been

in touch with Worley. That was when, as a West Bloomfield High School senior, he had the courage to testify to state legislators against stubborn lobbyists for state colleges and universities. He contended it was his right to choose a drug-free dormitory room when he went off to college.

"I wouldn't be able to live in an environment where alcohol is present," he told them. When college officials countered that he could always request a roommate change, he was firm: "I shouldn't have to go through that hassle."

Thanks in part to Worley's testimony and the ensuing threat of legislation, many of Michigan's public universities in 1989 began letting students sign up for a roommate who would maintain a drug and alcohol-free room. It works in the same way that they sign up to room with a non-smoker.



JUDITH DÖNER BERNE

It came too late for Worley. By the time MSU put it on its housing application, Worley was already out of the dorm.

So how did he manage? Worley said he was lucky. "I had a really good roommate. He was from Japan. After that, I wasn't in the dorms anymore."

And Worley, right from the start, sought out students who had his values as far as getting good grades and

being active.

He was president of the Tower Guard sophomore honor society, is comptroller for student government and participates in the school's branch of the national accounting honorary.

Now, Worley is secure enough in his sobriety that he can live in a fraternity house. He said, "My room's OK. It (alcohol-use) is going to be anywhere I go."

Although he doesn't graduate until next spring, he already has job offers and will sit for the examination to become a certified public accountant.

Applications for alcohol and drug-free dorm rooms haven't multiplied at MSU the way they have at the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University and Oakland University.

But Worley does see a tremendous change in what goes on in MSU dormitories. "Overall, they have really

cracked down in the dorms. The hall parties — that doesn't happen anymore."

Ferris State and Central Michigan are the only public colleges that don't have students sign up for drug-free rooms on their housing applications.

A CMU spokesman says its new application will include that option.

Once that happens, Michigan will be just one school away from being first in the nation to have all its public colleges give students the option of signing up for an alcohol- and drug-free room.

Students shouldn't have to depend on "luck" in a matter so critical to their lives.

Judith Döner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Big wheels turn backs on need for open housing

Recently I was the keynote speaker at the Oakland County Center for Open Housing's third annual session, which was well-attended by many enthusiastic supporters. Some of them approached me after my speech and asked me to come and speak elsewhere. (That's an improvement on being asked to speak elsewhere instead, which has been an occasional experience in my past.)

The Detroit Pistons civic-minded front office was also in attendance, in the person of OCCOH trustee Will Robinson, my colleague on the old Pershing High athletic staff and one of the greatest coaches in state history.

However, I couldn't help but note the absence of many invited real estate people and governmental and corporate reps who most needed to be there to hear how racial integration can rekindle the economic recovery of Detroit and its suburbs. Of particular concern was the conspicuous absence of some big bankers who have been approached

by OCCOH for funding, and the lack of real estate representation from my home community of Rochester Hills, whose Board of Realtors has declined to endorse OCCOH's mission.

Commendably, that North Oakland County community's City Council has endorsed that mission. Its schools, which were well-represented that evening by Meadowbrook School principal Carol Foster and intercultural coordinator Diana Rowland, are now living and breathing it after surviving raucously racist attacks on my integrated staffing initiatives when I was their assistant superintendent. It's time for the Rochester Area Board of Realtors to follow the City Council's and schools' examples.

There were other realities and corporations which weren't represented at the OCCOH session. This is symptomatic of the windmill force of the racism that energizes the unhealthy urban sprawl I have repeatedly tilted at in print and elsewhere, particularly dur-



JOHN TELFORD

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ing the past six years.

Now Chrysler has devastatingly deserted Highland Park. AT&T has announced a pending and highly symbolic county line division. One western Wayne County school district's assistant superintendent has warned me my multiracial staffing stipulations are "too hot" for that city's board of education.

The feds have instigated a split of Wayne from Oakland County into primary metro statistical/economic areas and gerrymandered voting districts by race. Also, the Oakland County Commissioners have rejected their own task force's balanced recommendations for combating urban sprawl.

In the midst of all this, I confess to feeling like an increasingly lone Don Quixote. I know OCCOH sometimes does, too.

Windmills can knock us to the ground, but they can lift us to the skies if we grab them tightly and hold on properly. The Oakland County Center

for Open Housing is one of the few organizations anywhere that is grabbing tight and holding on properly to the vital mission of racial integration, which it pursues with the tornado tenacity of Cervantes' legendary knight.

OCCOH keeps coming back, tilting its lance at its 61 target communities and their resident businesses and corporations, stubbornly refusing to be put off with pretty promises. Sooner or later, those communities and corporations all must heed OCCOH's message and actively support its mission, because that mission is righteous.

It can also be revivifying, not only for Oakland, but for Wayne and Macomb counties, which badly need centers for open housing, too.

John Telford, a Rochester Hills resident, most recently was assistant superintendent in the Rochester School District. He previously was executive director for secondary education in the Plymouth Canton district.

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