

## POINTS OF VIEW

## Inpatient care vital for young substance abusers

She tried to get off drugs and alcohol through the adolescent outpatient program she was first assigned to after an evaluation at the Maplegrove Center in West Bloomfield.

One afternoon, I looked up from my desk at the office and there she was. "I can't do it this way," was her desperate plea. "I have to go inpatient." It was the mid-'80s and there was a waiting list for the 14 adolescent beds, later expanded to 16, in Maplegrove's six-week inpatient program. In fact, it took every day of that six weeks, and then a long period of outpatient care, for her to conquer the tricky disease of alcoholism. Thankfully, in those days, insurance covered the cost of her residential care.

Now, here in the late '90s, statistics show alcohol and drug abuse is rising again, with students experimenting at an ever younger age. Yet on Dec. 31, Maplegrove Center, considered among the top 20 best treatment centers for alcoholism and drug abuse in the country, closed its inpatient services for adolescents.

The program was a shadow of its former self. The one-time six-week

program had been trimmed to five to seven days, the maximum insurance companies will pay for residential in this new age of managed care. Its adolescent population was averaging 2.5 people. Its energies had been thrust, of necessity, into outpatient care.

Still, even the shortened stay and fewer patients proved a lifesaver for Cheryl MacIlwain's 17-year-old son, for whom the outpatient program was not working. But her insurance company would only pay for two days. And when she wanted to pay for the rest of the week herself, the insurance company wouldn't allow it. She had to resort to calling her congressman, John Dingell, who intervened successfully on her son's behalf.

"The week seems to have turned his life around," says MacIlwain, a resident of Dearborn. He now is doing well in the outpatient program. But he says: "I wouldn't be clean today if I hadn't gone inpatient."

Robin DiMeglio of Oxford has her 13-year-old son back. He overdosed at middle school after drinking an inordinate amount of alcohol within a few minutes. She frantically searched for



JUDITH DONER BERNE

an adolescent residential program, finding only Maplegrove and Brighton Hospital. "Maplegrove was there when we needed it," she said. "He still refers back to his time there as the turning point in his life." Insurance covered his seven days in residence.

Both MacIlwain and DiMeglio are writing letters to anyone they think might help restore the program so other addicted teens can have the benefit of inpatient care within the tri-county area. Both see a huge difference among teens in the outpatient program who have had residential treatment and those who haven't.

In a Jan. 6 letter asking for help to Hillary Rodham Clinton, DiMeglio

wrote: "It is clear to us that these children have not had their drug cycle broken by any 'real' intervention and have no 'real' intention of becoming drug-free. We watched some families drop out ... because the parents alone could not control their children's drug use. Some of these parents had previously begged to have their children inducted into the inpatient program, but were denied for insurance reasons."

"Insurance companies don't want to cover in-house treatment," confirmed Glenn Black, administrator of Maplegrove, which will continue to offer inpatient treatment for adults. Unfortunately, Maplegrove has no proof of its residential program's effectiveness, since it has not tracked the young people who have gone through since it began in 1985.

A program that keeps those statistics is Pathway Family Center in Southfield, a lesser-known, highly structured program that specializes in hard-core adolescent addicts. They have tracked graduates of the year-long treatment program for up to five years, reports Terri Nissley, CEO. Success rate is 70 to 80 percent and

that does not amount to only being substance-free. "We are out to produce a productive person," Nissley said.

Pathway beats the insurance game by finding private homes for young addicts to live in while they begin their recovery. Now, Pathway is looking for a larger treatment site in order to triple the number of young people it can serve.

Nissley is disappointed to see Maplegrove close its residential unit. "Between managed care and the change in insurance, it's sad to see what's closed," she said.

For truly addicted adolescents, the most effective treatment is to remove them from the people and patterns that feed their addiction. Closing Maplegrove's residential program is clearly a step backward for our young people in need of help.

Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is former managing editor of the Eccentric Newspapers. You can comment on this column by calling (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1897, or by writing.

## Italy's shown Italian-style in Hilberry production

Americans became interested in Italy shortly after World War II. First was the Italian food fad, then movies and tourism. Usually, Italians were portrayed in caricature, as when Dean Martin sang: "When a woman hits a yo' eye like a big pizza pie, that's amore!"

Italy to Americans meant Mafia films or American-style romances with Italian backgrounds like "Three Coins in a Fountain" and "Roman Holiday." Into the breach steps Wayne State

University's Hilberry Theatre, best known for its graduate students' performances of Shakespeare and Moliere.

This season, the Hilberry has come up with a 1959 play by Eduardo de Filippo called "Saturday, Sunday, Monday" — one act for each day. He's set in the Neil Simion of Italy.

Setting is the Naples home of a middle-class family. Mama and papa have a falling out, a son wants to escape the staid family mold by start-

ing his own stylish shop, the daughter flirts with a TV career and splits with her boyfriend, and so on.

The play is built around food, with aromatic cooking of Ragu on stage. Every character stands out in the 17-member cast.

Mark Finnell, a third-year Hilberry player from Farmington Hills, handles the elderly grandfather's tantrums with the aplomb of a middle-aged man. He's younger.

Sara Wolf of Rochester Hills has starred as "Little Mary Sunshine" and Hermia in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," so an Italian maid

would seem a little out of her line. It isn't.

Costume designer Kathleen Crosby of Rochester also has handled the chores for "Tartuffe" and "Hedda Gabler." The Eastern Michigan University graduate avoids caricatures with clothing, too.

In sum, serious Italian art deserves serious stage treatment and serious applause. One can see why so many Hilberry trainees have gone on to rewarding careers on stage, screen and TV.

"Saturday, Sunday, Monday" will be repeated until Jan. 30. Ticket information: (313) 577-2072.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events.



TIM RICHARD

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## Airplane experience a nightmare

Many airplane passengers — especially business travelers — are feeling pretty grumpy these days.

Bargain fares that are unavailable or irrelevant. Cramped seats. Scant information. Cattle car treatment.

I know how they feel. On Sunday, Jan. 4, coming back with my family from a holiday abroad, I and 166 other passengers were detained against our will for more than six hours in an aircraft parked on the tarmac at Cincinnati International Airport.

Water ran out. Food, too. For a while, toilets were full and inoperable. Parents of sick children were frightened. A severely injured passenger ran low on pain medicine.

Nobody involved could do the humane, common sense thing: Get the passengers off to a secure place where they could go to the bathroom and call anxious families.

Not Allegro Air, the carrier. Not Northwest Airline, the ground service provider. Not the U.S. Customs Service nor the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service nor the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the responsible federal agencies. Not the Cincinnati International Airport Police.

Here's what happened. I bought round-trip tickets — Detroit, Caicos islands and back — through Travel Charter of Troy. Travel Charter contracted with Allegro Air (owned by a Mexican company) for the airplane and crew.

On Jan. 4, Allegro flight 492 left the islands at 5 p.m., bound for Detroit. At 7:45 p.m., the crew announced the Detroit airport was closed "due to weather" and that the flight was being diverted to Cincinnati.

We arrived in Cincinnati at 8:15 p.m., parked in an isolated part of the tarmac and later heard over the PA system: (1) The weather is still bad in Detroit; (2) we cannot not leave the aircraft until "customs" clears us; (3) customs and immigration authorities are unavailable; (4) the delay might be up to five hours.

By 11 p.m., passengers were, well, restive. I borrowed a cell phone from another passenger and called Gene Clabes, publisher of this company's newspapers in northern Kentucky, where Cincinnati International Airport is located. "Can't you do something? People are getting mighty uncomfortable."

Three Airport Police cars arrived along with



PHILIP POWER

a Northwest ground service vehicle. I asked police if they couldn't let passengers deplane under their custody into a secure area where they could get a drink, go to the toilet and make a phone call. "We can't do anything. It's the feds who have the jurisdiction. And until they say so, you cannot leave the plane."

Five hours later, we're still detained against our will while the authorities dither.

At 1:30 a.m., a passenger passed a note up to me: "Everyone walk forward to exit this plane — calmly, but just do it!" Things were getting tense.

At last, we get to a gate. More dithering, plus extensive finger-pointing. Somebody from the Agriculture Department threatens the pilot with a fine if anybody gets off. A woman bolts out the door sobbing, "I'm not going back on that plane."

Finally at 2 a.m. the pilot announces the weather has cleared and he intends to proceed to Detroit. Ten passengers leave. The rest of us take off at 2:34 p.m. No apology from Allegro. To detain against their will 167 American citizens for six hours on an aircraft with no food and water, inadequate toilets, sick kids and increasingly hysterical passengers is shameful and unnecessary.

Who's responsible? Jack Miles, Allegro's vice president for U.S. operations, blamed the feds: "People were told they couldn't get off the plane. Whose responsibility is that?" John Shay, port director for the U.S. Customs Service, blamed Allegro: "They went to Cincinnati knowing full well there was nobody around to clear the passengers or service the plane."

When I suggested a conference call to sort out the contradictory stories, Miles refused.

How to prevent a repetition? Put passengers first, jurisdiction and regulations second.

The U.S. government and the airline industry should negotiate an emergency procedure to get passengers off a plane and into a secure area. Designate a central authority to make decisions, reachable by a 1-800 number. Empower local police to take charge of international passengers. Share costs.

It's better than what happened Jan. 4.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@econline.com

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