

New coalition wants to reduce alcohol-drug use

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO
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Their progress may not be seen until the next generation of lakes area youngsters is in school. But a newly organized coalition is looking for help now to reduce drug and alcohol use in the Walled Lake schools.

"It can be very depressing, but as long as everybody stays together, it's gotta work," said Beth Bolter, member of the Novi Community That Cares Coalition.

She and other community members and school officials attended the organizational meeting of the Alliance of Community Teams (ACT) for the Greater Walled Lake Area Coalition.

The group is looking for parents and community members to help them accomplish their goal.

Rich and Staci Sadowski of Commerce Chiropractic Clinic attended the initial meeting because they promote a drug free environment in their line of work.

"You're always telling people to say no to drugs, then as soon as we feel bad, what do we do? We pop a pill," said Rich Sadowski. "I think there's a lot of hypocrisy going on."

That's why as soon as a child has a problem, like a break up, Sadowski said, they turn to drugs because that's what they've been trained to do.

Focusing on where and when the drug and alcohol use is occurring as well as ways to prevent it became a top priority of the school district following a March 1998 survey of substance abuse among students in the Walled Lake schools.

Janet Scheetz, supervisor of

WALLED LAKE SCHOOLS

special services for the district, helped the district obtain a \$16,000 grant, which the district was awarded from the Oakland County Health Division, to help start the coalition.

Kim Cunningham, a Commerce Township parent of two district children, was hired to lead the group.

"Her goal is to get the program started and become an independent entity," Scheetz said.

To move in that direction, the group needs community participation from individuals willing to share their ideas on how to begin the battle against substance abuse among youths, their first issue.

"We think we see a problem here when we're looking at 84.1 percent of our 12th graders using alcohol," Scheetz said. "The one that scares me the most is at fifth grade or below when almost 10 percent of kids say they started smoking."

"Pretty much 80 percent (of eighth, 10th and 12th graders) think they can get whatever they want whenever they want," Scheetz said.

With nine communities in the school district and much of the use taking place at unsupervised parties and friends home, Cunningham said, "This is bigger than any of us. Substance abuse wants us to believe it doesn't exist."

"We're hoping we can really force a community approach to lots of things in the lakes area," Superintendent James Geisler said. "It's important that we look

at it as 'this is not a problem for the Walled Lake school system, this is a problem for the lakes area.'"

Geisler said parents are very reluctant to ask if parties and other events involving their children will be supervised.

"How do you get parents to be involved without seeming to be a fanatic," Geisler asked.

Commerce Township resident Tom Kellher said he was concerned about the violence associated with substance abuse taking place before school.

"I'm concerned if a child goes ballistic and does take a child's life or a teacher," Kellher said.

School officials have been aware that substance abuse has been a problem for a long time, Geisler said. That's why student assistance coordinators were hired to develop programs and address individuals with abuse

problems and police liaisons are located in both high schools.

Walled Lake Central police-liaison Timothy Hein said there has been a decrease in the number of substance abuse offenses they handle, but Hein knows the problem isn't going away.

"We've had a much harder time finding the drugs this year," Hein said. "What we have done in the schools is limit the availability because it has to be done in secret now. If you can limit the availability, you can decrease use."

Next meeting: The new Alliance of Community Teams (ACT) for the Greater Walled Lake Area Coalition meeting is scheduled for 7:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 25 at the Walled Lake Schools Employees Federal Credit Union, located at 3095 S. Commerce Road just west of Central High.

New Sheriff Bouchard announces his picks for staff

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If you're wondering whether discipline or spirit esprit de corps within the Oakland Sheriff's Department would slip once a civilian — rather than a spit-and-polish military man — assumed command, relax.

It hasn't — in the first week, anyway.

That seemed to be a message that came across Thursday at a press conference at which newly appointed Sheriff Michael Bouchard announced his pick for undersheriff and chief of staff, Major Thomas Quisenberry and Capt. Michael McCabe, respectively.

had body language. Without reading too much too soon into the situation, here's why that message might have significance.

Under the late John F. Nichols, the department had the reputation of a disciplined, spit-and-polish unit striving for professionalism. The department wasn't perfect, and the barrel has had some bad apples.

When Bouchard — an unassuming civilian with a self-effacing reputation — took over, some people familiar with the department probably wondered if

things might change... if expectations might be lowered.

Not likely, judging by the body language at Thursday's press conference.

To begin with, the conference room was jammed to near capacity as civilian personnel, deputies and command officers crowded into the lower level of the complex. At previous news conferences, said one command officer, people were ordered to attend. "But not this time," said the officer.

In a no-nonsense way, Bouchard announced the promo-

tions and took care of the business at hand. Quisenberry said the job would be a challenge. "For every other job I've held, he said, "there was a job description." But the duties of undersheriff were much less structured.

Referring to process for selecting the second in command, Quisenberry joked, "We flipped a coin, and I lost."

McCabe said he'd strive to make the department better. Then he recalled the last time he

and Bouchard were literally on the same team. That was at Brother Rice High School, when Bouchard was a star and he was equipment manager, said McCabe.

Bouchard was appointed Monday, and he admitted he was still learning some fundamental things, the location of the men's room being one.

That was a self-effacing understatement, of course. Bouchard has held staff meetings, met with judges, toured the jail and pursued the budget to prepare himself as commander of a 915-member unit.

Picking his management team was an important step, the new sheriff said. But it was a decision that had to be made quickly, with the best information available.

When he said sought counsel of others — the county executive, prosecutor and chiefs of police he knew from his years as a police officer — Bouchard said, a few names surfaced repeatedly.

Quisenberry and McCabe weren't the only people recommended for the top level jobs, he said. But their names came up frequently, Bouchard said.

While announcing his top managers was important, to the department and interested Oakland residents, there seemed to be another message conveyed as if the press conference itself

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CURRENT TREATMENT FOR OSTEOARTHRITIS
It seems that almost every day, the news on health matters carries a headline about new drugs for arthritis. If you have osteoarthritis, you may feel you should make an appointment now to see your doctor so you can benefit from these advances in therapy.

First, while the barriers talk about arthritis, the small print notes that the new drugs are meant for rheumatoid, not osteoarthritis.

Second, it is possible that a class of new drugs, the COX-2 inhibitors, may help in the pain of osteoarthritis. However, no studies to date have shown that the COX-2 types will relieve pain any better than what you can choose from now. In addition, other investigations fail to show that these new agents slow the cartilage wear and tear that characterizes osteoarthritis.

At least for now, the adage holds that the old ways remain the best ways. In the treatment of osteoarthritis, if you have knee involvement and are overweight, then losing at least some of the excess pounds will help relieve stress on the knees. For other joints, treatment requires a variety of response. Acetaminophen for pain and removal of joint fluid if it accumulates, are the basics of therapy. It is also important to continue daily activity to maintain your muscle strength and flexibility. Finally, no matter what your age, you should consider joint replacement when the above measures fail.

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THE THREAT OF GUM DISEASE

Not only can gum disease cause tooth loss, but research shows it can threaten overall health. First, North Carolina researchers found that pregnant women with periodontal disease were at risk for delivering low birth weight babies. Then, a study published in the British Medical Journal showed that men and women with periodontal disease had a 25% higher risk of coronary disease, and a 65% higher risk of dying from all causes, than people without gum disease. This was confirmed by a Boston study showing that people with the most gum disease were twice as likely to die of heart disease and three times as likely to suffer stroke. The good news? Gum disease can be halted with professional care.

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