

Monroe County and the War On Drug Abuse

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

Second in a Series

The medical program for drug abuse in Rochester is admittedly "crisis treatment" oriented; whereas the counseling program is described as being a "crusade of avoidance" by Charles A. Schiano, the attorney chosen unanimously by the Monroe County Legislature to be chairman of the seven-member County Narcotics Council.

As directed by law, the council is: "... to develop a program of community participation for the purpose of disseminating knowledge regarding drug abuse, especially by youths, and to create a climate in which persons seeking assistance for their narcotic problems can meet without embarrassment with responsible individuals and agencies in a position to help."

Schiano talks to town boards and tells them what they should and must legally do to establish a local guidance council program. "The beauty of this idea," he explained, "is every one has their own local, individual program for their local drug problem. The needs vary between the city of Rochester and Fairport, for example. Each town group must work out its own program, and all top flight people are volunteering, so the product is effective programs."

The Irondequoit Narcotic Guidance Council, which Schiano described as "the best one set up so far," has established two basic counseling services soon to be combined under a single roof.

Activities of this unit will include street, individual and group counseling services. Headquarters for the operation are a drop-in center at 62 Titus Ave. They have also conducted a pilot "hot-line" phone service, manned by physicians and clergymen.

Funding is provided by the Town of Irondequoit and the State Narcotic Addiction Control Commission.

"It is the government's plan that drug abuse problems should be met at the grass roots level," Schiano said, "so the axiom we

are working on is maximum education coincidental with rehabilitation."

"We are hoping to introduce drug education beginning in the third grade soon, and there is an immediate need for a 'half-way house' in the seventh and third wards, or we will have a greater problem in these areas soon," he explained.

"Now we are in a state of flux because of the newness of the problem we are dealing with," he continued. "We won't be able to evaluate our work until we see how the participation is by those who need help, so we work on a trial and error basis for now."

"We are trying to organize a group of agencies already involved in drug work, that would act as an umbrella, to eliminate overlapping of funding and work. We need a council of social agencies to work as a liaison organization, in order to avoid duplication of services and to encourage the evaluation of operating programs."

"Overlapping of efforts creates problems," Schiano said. "It is our firm belief that once local NGCs are set up in all towns and, advisory groups of local agencies are organized into working format, we will be all set."

Schiano is hoping to organize a program for area war veterans with a drug problem, involving an outreach program for them providing the help and the confidentiality they need. "This is new, but we feel we owe a real obligation to these people," he said.

"The county council is also planning a seminar in October for educators and law enforcers," Schiano said, "in the hope of opening better lines of communication, to show that they aren't at odds and can work together."

"We are trying to get each member of the council involved directly by taking one aspect: organizing educational programs, liaison with medical authorities, and liaison with social action groups, for example."

The seven members of the Monroe County Narcotic Guidance Council are:



Karen Polizzi is helping ready the Irondequoit Drop-In Center for the open house Friday, Aug. 13. Right, Charles Schiano, chairman of the Monroe County Narcotics Guidance Council.



Dr. Harold C. Miles — executive director of the council and director of Monroe County department of Mental Health, Charles A. Schiano — chairman of the council, and attorney; Dr. John D. Cato — associate professor of urban studies at Colgate Rochester Divinity School; Ferdinand J. Smith — disc jockey for WBBF; Mildred Johnson — director of the Virginia Wilson Helping Hand Center; Nicholas Zona — director of health education of the Rochester city school district; Dr. Douglas Evans — director of emergency services at Rochester Mental Health Center.

Next week: the law enforcers' view of the problem of drug abuse in Rochester, his experience with it and his reactions to it.

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