

Westminster Area



"Building a Community Without Drugs"

February 2004

Congratulations

GIANNA GOMEZ

Westminster Area CAAT Rep for F.M. Day Elementary & Westminster Elementary Schools

Awarded 2003 Volunteer Of The Year

By the Community Education Foundation (CEF)

For her many hours in volunteer efforts at Westminster Elementary

Toxic Brew of Chemicals Cooked Up in Methamphetamine Laboratories

Study Results

People "cooking" methamphetamine in thousands of clandestine laboratories across the nation produce a toxic cloud of hydrochloric acid, phosphine, iodine, and methamphetamine that spreads through the entire house or apartment, according to researchers at National Jewish Medical Research Center. The findings help identify and quantify the health hazard clandestine methamphetamine laboratories pose to adults and children living in the labs, and to health and law enforcement personnel entering them.

"We were surprised by the large amount of hydrochloric acid and methamphetamine vaporized during the cook," said John Martyny, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Medicine at National Jewish. "The chemicals spread throughout the house. **The methamphetamine is deposited everywhere, from walls and carpets to microwaves, tabletops and clothing. Children living in those labs might as well be taking the drug directly.**"

Martyny presented his findings January 12 to U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Karen Tandy, Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and law enforcement and health officials from throughout the Denver metro region. Senator Campbell helped secure initial funding for the project.

Illegal methamphetamine use has skyrocketed in recent years in the Denver metro area and around the country. Because methamphetamine is relatively easy to manufacture, users produce it at thousands of home labs across the country.

Occupants of the labs, including children, who are found in about 30% of them, are exposed to a variety of toxic chemicals. Law enforcement personnel have reported illnesses they attribute to repeated exposures during methamphetamine laboratory investigations.

Prior to this study, however, no one really knew exactly what kind of exposures people faced in the laboratories, nor how these chemicals accumulated in household building materials. Excerpted from *News njc.org* January 14, 2004.

Check North Metro Task Force web site www.nmtf.us for more methamphetamine information on *Environmental Impact, What to look for in your neighborhood, What to look for if you're buying property or renting an apartment, house or hotel room, List of meth lab investigation locations.*

Children of Alcoholics Week

The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) promotes Children of Alcoholics Week 2004 from Sunday, February 8 through Saturday, February 14. The theme of this public awareness campaign, "**A Celebration of Hope and Healing Across Generations,**" proclaims the responsibility all share for the well-being of all children, but especially for those who struggle with alcohol or drug addiction in their families. NACoA envisions a society in which these vulnerable children have access to adults who can help them and are encouraged to seek help.

How many COAs are there? How many become alcoholics? There were an estimated 28.6 million COAs in the U.S. in 1991, nearly 11 million of them under age 18. Of the under-18 group, almost 3 million will develop alcoholism, other drug problems, and/or other serious coping problems. About half of COAs marry alcoholics and are likely to recreate the same kinds of highly stressful and unhealthy families in which they grew up, unless supportive interventions are provided to them in their formative years.

What about the other COAs? Based on stories from adult COAs in professional treatment and self-help programs, it appears all children are affected by family alcoholism. But, going back to the good news, many of them make positive adjustments to their families' alcoholism. Even COAs in high-risk environments with other chronic sources of stress – including poverty, racism, disrupted marriages, serious emotional problems, and histories of abuse and neglect – are often able to overcome these painful beginnings and create healthy, fulfilling lives for themselves.

How can COAs be helped to "bounce back?" This is where the good news is really exciting: The child in an alcoholic home may be helped whether the alcoholic stops drinking or not! It is not necessary to do anything to change the adult's drinking behavior. And helping a COA does not require special training or skills. Simple acts of kindness and compassion can make a big difference in the lives of COAs. Just by "being there," to lend an ear, share normal interests and activities, talk about feelings, accept their mistakes, and support and

encourage their friend-making efforts, YOU will be helping.

What else helps COAs? Tell them that they did not cause alcoholism and cannot cure or control it. But they can learn to cope with it. Make clear that children are not responsible for solving grown-up problems.

Understand that COAs often build up defenses against the pain, shame, guilt, or loneliness they may feel. They may show off, act tough, keep secrets, or hide. You may help by just accepting them for who they are. Encouraging them to share their thoughts and feelings will help them learn to trust others and accept and adjust to their lives.

Get them involved in something about which they feel good. It can be something small like taking care of a pet; or a hobby such as collecting rocks, or stamps, or comic books; or a sport. Go slow, don't push, but keep trying.

Do something with them on a regular basis, even if it's only twice a year, such as on the 4th of July or Martin Luther King's birthday. Providing some consistency and showing that adults can be counted on are important assurances for young people who may have experienced many broken promises and unpredictable parental behavior.

Gently help them get positive attention from others. Let them know they are wonderful, special, and cared about just because they are who they are. Again, go slowly, but tell them often.

Help them see life as really living even though there are times and situations that may be very painful. Help them see beyond their present circumstances. Help them feel connected to nature, art, and history; to heritage, culture, religion; to their community. Help them build a larger picture of their lives and their world than their families' current problems.

Help them understand that it is okay to ask for help. Assure them that getting help is a sign of strength. Offer some examples from your own life so they'll know how it's done and that it really is okay. Excerpted from <http://www.health.org/govpubs/ph318>

The cost of alcoholism to society is estimated at approximately \$166 billion each year

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APTS