

# Bothell Reporter

## Former Clinton drug czar McCaffrey discusses abuse at CRC Health Group's Canyon Park Treatment Solutions in Bothell

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According to the 2009 national survey done by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the number of first-time drug users increased by 9 percent last year, reversing what had been a downward trend that had lasted at least since 2002.

What drugs are being abused? Heroin and the non-medical use of prescription drugs top the list, according to Ret. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, appointed by President Bill Clinton as the nation's second drug czar and serving in that position from 1996 to 2001.

Now president of his own consulting firm, McCaffrey had previously gained national exposure as commander of the 24th Infantry Division during the first Iraq conflict. At the time he retired from active duty, he was the most highly decorated four-star general in the Army. Besides consulting work, McCaffrey is a security and terrorism analyst for NBC News.



On Nov. 30, McCaffrey was at the CRC Health Group's Canyon Park Treatment Solutions in Bothell. A member of the CRC Board of Directors, McCaffrey met with the center's staff and local law-enforcement officials just as the Bothell facility is seeking permission to expand its patient base from 385 to 500. A rise in demand for their rehabilitation services, which includes both medication (methadone, among others) and counseling, is the reason for the request, said clinic director David Newman.

According to Newman, the clinic's current patients, with an average age of between 18 and 25, are split about 50:50 between users of heroin and abusers of prescription pills of one kind or another. Newman noted one trend among heroin users is they are getting younger. He also said the state of Washington is now fifth in the country in terms of new cases of prescription drug abuse.

Both Newman and McCaffrey said the most abused prescription drugs are opiates such as Vicodin. At one time very popular, pills containing oxycodone are starting to lose their street luster. Newman said manufacturers revised production methods making the drug difficult to inject or smoke.

Bothell, not incidentally, has not been immune to the increase in illicit drug use.

"Sometimes it seems like everything we do is related to drug abuse," said Bothell Police Chief Forrest Conover, who added that drugs play a role in incidents ranging from thefts to domestic violence. Following the national trends, Conover said heroin use and the abuse of prescription drugs both are on the rise locally.

For his part, McCaffrey blames efforts not just to legalize, but normalize, drug use as the reason behind the increase in drug abuse. The national study showed marijuana still is by far the most popular illicit drug and McCaffrey clearly sees its use as a stepping stone to stronger drugs. McCaffrey also contended prevention efforts need to be aimed at teenagers, that parents and pediatricians ought to be on the front lines of drug-abuse prevention.

"You want to fight a war on drugs? Sit down in your kitchen and talk to your children," McCaffrey said. He contended if drug use can be avoided during developmental years, problems down the line are far less likely.

According to McCaffrey, there is little evidence of any legitimate medical benefit to marijuana. He added a contention those seeking to legalize marijuana and other drugs send the message that drug use is harmless. But McCaffrey added

you will never find an addict, or recovering addict, who shares that opinion. Further, McCaffrey defended the country's long-standing efforts to crack down on illicit drug use.

"First of all, it's not a war on drugs," he said, adding that if it was, the country is winning. McCaffrey said even with recent increases in abuse, overall drug use is down since its heyday in the late 1970s.

"Alcohol does more damage than any drug in America," McCaffrey added.

Despite some possibly alarming statistics, McCaffrey's message was not all gloom and doom. He said clinics such as the Canyon Park Center can and do make a difference. At one point, he added the abusers generally get the media attention.

"The hundreds of thousands of people in recovery are invisible," he said.

The Canyon Park facility has received the support of Bothell City Council in its expansion efforts. Officials have said police regularly visit the facility.

"We've never had any kind of violent incident," Newman said, adding the clinic expects patients to adhere to a code of conduct both while at the facility and elsewhere.

Newman said CRC will take the support it received from Bothell and other surrounding communities to the Snohomish County Council early next year.

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