

**RADIO BROADCAST FROM PHILADELPHIA CENTER TACKLES ISSUE OF  
YOUTH AND DRUG ABUSE  
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PHILADELPHIA**

For the second time in the past 18 months, “Voices in the Family,” a Philadelphia-based public radio program, taped a two-part broadcast before a live audience at the SGI-USA’s Philadelphia Community Center.

Hosted by Dan Gottlieb, Ph.D., a leading Philadelphia therapist, the program explored the subject of youth and substance abuse, including steps that can be taken to help prevent drug abuse and assist those who may be facing it. It featured six panelists, including four experts on the treatment and prevention of drug abuse and two 18-year-olds, Rick and Terri, who have received treatment for drug abuse.

Experts on the panel included Hollie Brayer, a licensed psychologist and the clinical coordinator of The Bridge, a facility that provides long-term therapy for dependent youth; Myra B. Shure, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at MCP Hahnemann University in Philadelphia; Jim Berman, M.D., chief of staff of the Caron Foundation, a leading treatment facility; and David O’Connell, Ph.D., clinical director of the adult and adolescent services at the foundation.

In addition, Larry Mendte, a news anchor for the local NBC affiliate, served as the program’s co-host. And Sonny Hill, founder of a well-known city basketball league and host of a popular sports radio show, assisted in fielding questions from the audience, which included many SGI-USA youth division members.

During the roughly two-hour taping, panelists responded to a wide range of questions from those in the audience.

In response to a question on what adults should be saying to their children to ensure that they don’t become entangled with drugs, Dr. Shure commented on the concept of slogans. “‘Just Say No’ or ‘Just Don’t Do It,’ that’s what we’ve been hearing we should tell kids to say,” she explained. “The problem with these slogans is that they don’t tell children to think about what else they can do. It doesn’t take into account their fears. After they say no, what do they do next?”

As adults, she advised, it’s important to focus them on their goals in life and how drugs can interfere with their ability to reach them.

Dr. Shure emphasized the importance of listening to what young people are saying. “When the ideas are their ideas and their thoughts, they’re much more likely to carry them with them and make them internalized.”

Responding to a question from a young woman in the audience who asked, “What do you do if someone offers you drugs...and they threaten to hurt you if you don’t take them?” Terri responded that they wouldn’t be saying such things if they were truly your friends. “Don’t hang with them again,” she advised.

Terri, who started using drugs when she was 13 years old, admitted that she didn’t always know that.

Many of the panelists emphasized the need for young people to have someone they can turn to for help.

Rick, who admitted he didn’t have such a role model, said that he wished he had one.

Dr. Berman noted that it’s important for people to understand that drug addiction is a disease, no different than diabetes or heart disease.

“It’s not so much that you grow up in a family with drugs,” Dr. Berman said, “but it’s the genetics that’s passed on. What the research hopefully will bring to light is what we can do to change that chemistry so that Ricky and Terri won’t go out, use a drug and get the wrong message [in their brain].”

Some people, he explained, can use drugs one or two times and walk away from it. But others like Terri and Rick can’t.

Responding to a question on what role hope may play in overcoming drug addiction, Ms. Brayer of The Bridge said that “the treatment process is entirely dependent on the adolescent and his or her level of hope.”

Dr. O’Connell then commented on the role spirituality can play in a person’s recovery. “Research has shown that people who have a strong religious affiliation, have a spiritual program, engage in spiritual practices such as prayer, contemplation and meditation, do very well not just with this disease, but with any chronic disease.

“Hope,” he explained, “is directly associated with the larger picture — that there’s more going on here than the horrible position I am in as an addict.

“From my perspective,” he continued, “spirituality is at the cornerstone of recovery.”

“Voices in the Family” selected the Philadelphia Community Center as the site for the broadcast because of the SGI-USA’s active role in helping young people in the city, according to the show’s then producer Eva Blackwell, who is also an SGI-USA member. The broadcast was taped in late September. In 1998, the program broadcast a program on youth and violence from the same center.