

Phones busy for local drug-rehabs

Aug 9, 91

By JAMES O'CONNOR
Sun Staff Writer

The phone's been ringing off the hook at a the Winnipeg branch of Narcotics Anonymous since Sun stories on the connection between an unrelated group, Narconon, and the controversial Church of Scientology.

"People have been calling ... but one of the differences is we are self-supporting — we don't solicit funds or contributions," said NA volunteer Bob R., a seven-year member who first heard of Narconon this week.

"We've had people calling us up, questioning whether we're affiliated or related. We're strictly a support group, and we have no official stand or opinions on any other program."

With a national assembly representing groups across Canada, NA now meets two times each night of the week in different locations in the city.

It is financed through "passing the basket around" at each meeting, with members — ranging in age from teens to mid-

'50s — digging deep in their pockets to support the program.

The membership — currently at 150 — is drawn mostly from graduates of residential or day-treatment programs, he said.

"But that's not a prerequisite. The only requirement is the desire to stop using drugs. It's a year-round job."

For addicts seeking help, there are several private and public paths to follow in Winnipeg.

However, the institution of choice of Winnipeg Police is the provincially-funded Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba, an officer with the department's victim services office said.

"I do get calls from parents who have an out-of-control teen at home," Const. Richard Jones said, adding he refers cases to the AFM.

And a treatment supervisor with the AFM said it treats more than 400 adolescents each year.

"That's that whole range from kids who have just had some kind of experimentation to kids who are IV drug users," Gerry

Kolesar said.

"Alcohol is still the big drug, and then marijuana or cannabis products, and then hallucinagens — mushrooms and LSD — and solvent sniffing is pretty common, too."

Each case is different and must be tailored to the individual, he said.

While the AFM only offers non-residential programs for teens, the non-profit St. Norbert Foundation has a waiting list for its 24 beds.

The foundation keeps its programs secular, unless religion is deemed integral to the treatment, an official said.

"We do have some cultural enrichment classes for aboriginal people in which they can learn about their heritage and that does have a spiritual component," director of youth services Connie Andersen said.

Stanley Steinmann, executive director of the privately-funded Alcohol & Drug Dependency Information & Counselling Services, said summer is traditionally slow for his 30-year-old business.

B.C. politician springs to defence

AUG 9 1991

The Church of Scientology is a "church like any other church," a Vancouver politician said yesterday.

Social Credit MLA John Reynolds said he doesn't understand why there is so much fuss over Narconon's links to Scientology.

"They (Narconon) have operated here in B.C. for many years, and I think they have a reputation of doing a good job," Reynolds said.

Reynolds recently wrote a letter to Narconon praising the program on its silver anniversary.

The letter was included in a package of materials a Winnipeg company — Mr. Peperette — handed out to teenagers who have been hired to fund-raise for Narconon under a Say No to Drugs campaign.

When pressed for details about the drug-rehabilitation program, Reynolds said he doesn't know anyone who has gone through Narconon.

Reynolds also responded angrily to the comments of a Vancouver substance abuse counsellor who said Narconon has

been "virtually blacklisted" by people in the field.

"Any time people try to do anything that cuts into doctors' fees, doctors are going to complain," the West Vancouver MLA said.



TIMMERS: Annoyed

The church, which has been called a cult, offers expensive self-improvement courses to its members.

Although Reynolds said he isn't a member of the church, he said there's no question Scientologists have gotten a bad rap.

"I know people who are in the church, and I don't think they are after anybody's money."

While the church has denied its affiliation to Narconon, both follow the teachings of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard. The church also promotes Narconon in its literature.

Although the controversy surrounding Narconon surfaced in Winnipeg this week, the Say No to Drugs campaign is nothing new to the city.

More than a year ago, the Scientologists sponsored an anti-drug campaign which was endorsed in a news release by Coun. Donovan Timmers and Winnipeg Police Chief Herb Stephen.

Timmers said yesterday he remembers the campaign, but never knew it was sponsored by the church.

"Regardless of all the things that have been said about the Church of Scientology, just the fact that I wasn't told of the connection makes me annoyed."

Timmers, who said he knows little about the church, said he hooked up to the anti-drug program after signing a petition brought to him by a constituent.