

carped

by Scott McCullar

### Dallas schools to offer stress programs to combat suicide

Associated Press

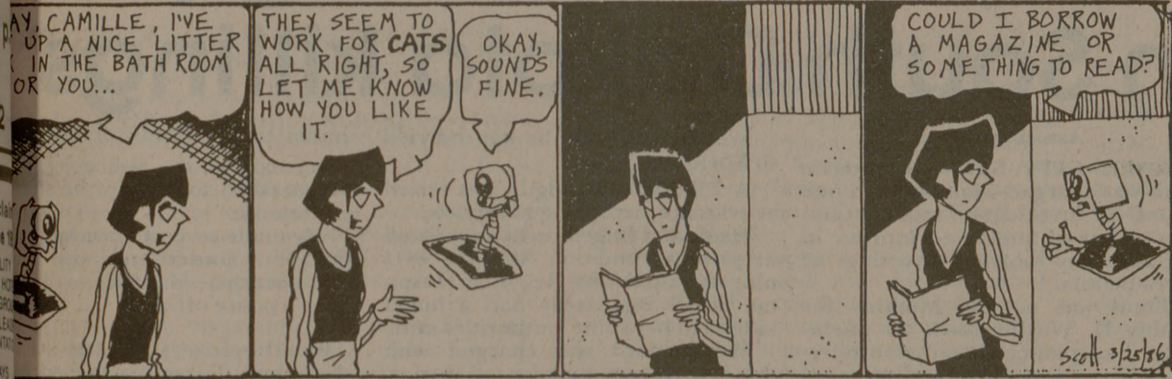
DALLAS — Several suburban school districts, concerned about suicides among students, are sponsoring specialized peer-counseling groups for stress-related problems that can lead to drug abuse, depression and suicide.

In the south Dallas County suburb of Duncanville, student Dan Kehoe said the school program High on Life helped him kick a \$300-week drug habit and allowed him to do "pretty much the same things that any normal kid does."

The 17-year-old senior said he now works in the program to help other students benefit from his experiences.

High on Life, like similar programs at other Dallas county high schools, is designed to help students deal with pressures that could lead to drug abuse, depression or suicide.

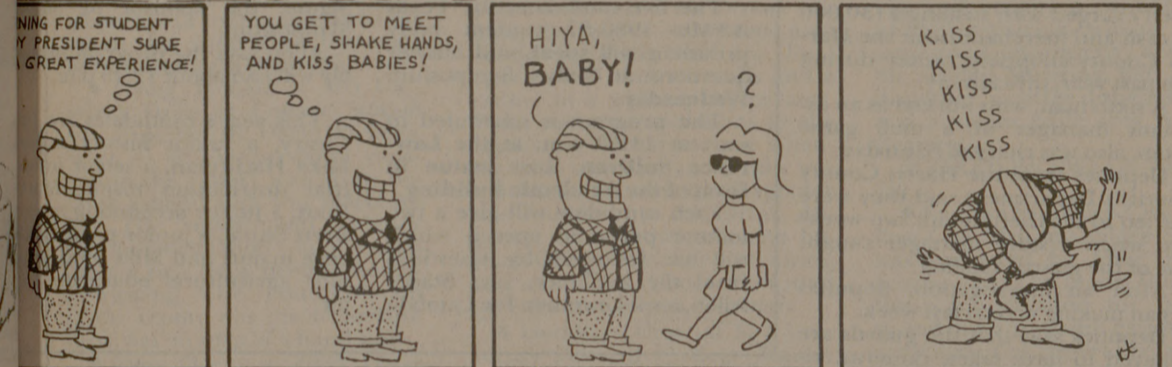
In the Plano Independent School District, peer support groups exist even at the elementary school level, where students watch out for lonely students.



by Jeff MacNelly



by Kevin Thomas



### Counselors say AIDS victims now high risks of suicide

Associated Press

DALLAS — An AIDS patient who recently jumped to his death in his hospital room illustrates the risks of suicide among the high-risk group and dramatizes the need for new approaches, counselors said.

They said they have stepped up their efforts on helping suicidal victims because of a growing concern that the double blow of mental illness and social stigma could make the group at a high risk.

Suicide prevention workers said it is soon to gauge the effects of a patient's death of an AIDS patient, they agreed there is an increased concern about AIDS sufferers jumping at suicide as a way out.

William Waybourn, a member of the board of directors of the Dallas AIDS Alliance said, "The grim reality is that each one thinks he's going to be the one to beat it. I think when the realization comes that they're not going to, that's pretty overwhelming."

Officials said Rodney Self, a 32-year-old AIDS patient was found outside Parkland Memorial Hospital Sunday after he apparently jumped from a sixth-story window.

Suicide prevention counselors said they had not increased dramatically Monday, but that the true reaction will not come for a few days.

"We listen and that's probably the biggest thing a buddy does."

— Rex Patton, volunteer at the Oak Lawn Counseling Center.

Waybourn said the most typical reaction to Self's death is surprise that there are not more.

He also said workers believe there have been other AIDS-related suicides, but they have not been publicized.

"If anything, this young man's death has served to get attention to a very desperate situation," he said.

Counselors dealing with suicidal AIDS patients can do little more than listen, he said.

"It's nothing you can argue against rationally," he said. "AIDS is fatal."

Judie Smith, director of education for the Dallas Suicide and Crisis Center, said the center started training programs in cooperation with the Gay Alliance and the Aids Resource Center in January.

In a similar incident last October, two men believed to be suffering from AIDS tied themselves together at the waist and jumped 35 floors

from their New York apartment building.

Charles Villalonga, 43, and Gilbert Rodriguez, 44, died in the October incident, according to reports. Officials would not publicly say the men were AIDS patients, but an unnamed detective told the Associated Press it was known that at least one man had the incurable disease.

Smith said there are few statistics on suicide among AIDS victims, but it is receiving more attention. "We're (suicide prevention workers) going to have a conference next week in Atlanta. I'll wager that that's going to be a hot topic," she said.

A spokeswoman for Parkland Hospital said no additional counseling is planned for other AIDS patients. She said administrators are checking windows to see they are secure, but fire codes prohibit barring them.

Catherine Ellis, a hospital spokeswoman, said, "We will make sure that our nursing staff is just very sensitive."

Rex Patton, a volunteer at the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, said the best tools are listening to AIDS patients and telling them where to find help for their physical and psychological pain.

Patton works with the Buddy Project for AIDS patients at the center. "We listen and that's probably the biggest thing a buddy does," he said.

Concern about high school stress echoes increases in teen-age suicide statistics. In 1984, the last year for which statistics are available, 57 people under age 25 committed suicide in Dallas County, a 16 percent increase over the previous year.

The trend toward creating peer groups to help with high school stress began after 1983 when a string of teen-age suicides in suburban Plano shocked parents and school administrators.

Judie Smith, an official with the Suicide and Crisis Center of Dallas, said, "I've worked in this field for years and I've seen a real change in attitude within the schools. At one time they didn't even want to talk about it."

### 5-ton elephant attacks Houston Zoo attendant

HOUSTON — A 5-ton elephant wrapped its trunk around a zookeeper's neck, swung him around and slammed him against a wall, but the man escaped serious injury, officials said.

John Werler, director of the Houston Zoo, said the 18-year-old Asian elephant reached over a barricade in a pen and grabbed keeper William J. Neuser as he watered elephants in an adjacent pen.

Jesse D. Frederick, who was visiting the zoo Sunday afternoon, went to Neuser's aid when he heard the keeper's screams.

Karen Frederick said her husband climbed over a fence separating the elephant's pen from the public and then onto a rock in the middle of the pen to distract the elephant from Neuser, who was lying on the ground where the animal had dropped him.

She said Neuser escaped when the elephant turned toward her husband.

A hospital spokesman said Neuser suffered only scrapes and was released after treatment at Hermann Hospital.

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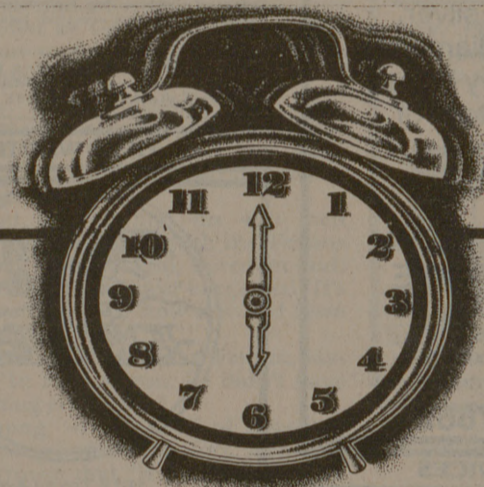
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