

Smuggling awareness program asks public's help in war on drugs

By Juliette Rizzo
Staff Writer

The war on drugs is not a job for law enforcement alone. John P. McDermott, public affairs officer with the United States Customs Service, said the Customs Service has created a Drug Smuggling Awareness Program to stimulate awareness of drug smuggling along the southwestern border of the United States.

In the lecture series "Drugs: A Modern Dilemma," sponsored by MSC Political Forum, McDermott spoke about fighting the flow of drugs across our nation's borders.

"Smugglers will do anything to bring in a profit, he said. 'Smugglers will bring in illegal drugs anywhere they can find a hole in our defense,' he said. 'It is our responsibility to prevent smuggling.'

Today, Customs means many things to many people, he added. "For the tourist, we are the people

in blue who check baggage at the airport," he said. "To the international drug trafficker, we are the enemy who endangers drugs. To the ship captains or captains of other vessels, we are the experts who determine whether their shipment of pre-Colombian art has been legally imported into the country."

As a law enforcement agency, the Customs Service now serves 300 ports of entry into the United States. They maintain a constant watch over all U.S. land and sea borders.

To counter the threat of smuggling, the Service monitors border areas using extensive air and land surveillance programs.

The surveillance operation along the southwestern U.S. border is known as Operation Alliance. Six aerostats are strategically positioned to detect low flying aircraft. The balloons contain the most sophisticated radar systems available.

McDermott said the area is heavily

monitored, because it is through this area that one-third of all cocaine, marijuana and heroine is smuggled into the United States. Twenty seven percent of worldwide smuggling action takes place near the U.S.-Mexico border, he said.

The Marine Air Force Base in California also installed a new radar system that can monitor all air traffic from San Diego to Brownsville. It is so sophisticated that it can determine the difference between commercial, military, private and law enforcement planes, he said.

McDermott said monitoring drug smuggling is "like a football game where we put in the defense and they attack it."

He said that for the United States to defend against this attack, the Customs Service must make citizens more aware of illegal smuggling.

"We are calling upon each citizen to give us a hand," he said. "By reporting suspicious actions and peo-

ple to Customs we can plug our gap in defense."

Citizens who become aware of any suspicious activity that might be smuggling-related can call 1-800-BE-ALERT 24 hours a day. Customs will pay cash rewards for any information leading to the arrest of a smuggler or the seizure of illegal substances. Sources who provide information will remain completely anonymous.

27 seizures of illegal substances have resulted from more than 8,000 phone calls, he said. One such call led to the confiscation of 1,200 pounds of cocaine.

McDermott said he thinks the Drug Smuggling Awareness Program has been successful so far.

"If we cooperate and share information," he said, "we can turn from losing the war on drugs to winning it. We can seal off the air and force smugglers down to the ground where we can deal with them."

Drug authority says alcohol most abused drug in United States

By Sharon Maberry
Staff Writer

Alcohol is the most widely abused drug in America, a spokesman for the Center for Drug Prevention and Education at A&M said Wednesday.

"Alcohol is, by far, the most damage-causing and expensive mood-altering drug in the country," Dr. Dennis Reardon said. His speech was part of the E.L. Miller's Lecture Series about "Drugs: The Modern Dilemma," sponsored by MSC Political Forum.

"Let there be no mistake," Reardon said. "Alcohol is a drug."

Three times as many alcohol abusers than drug abusers are admitted to state-supported treatment centers, Reardon said. Less than 10 percent of the people who drink consume 50 percent of the alcohol produced in the United States.

Although alcohol is the most abused drug, other drugs are severely abused, he said. Marijuana, a "soft" drug, has been tried at least once by 33 percent of the American population older than 12, he said, and 10 percent of the population over age 12 has used it within the last 30 days.

Cocaine, a "hard" drug, has been tried at least once by 12 percent of Americans, and 3 percent report themselves as current users, he said.

Drug abuse has a direct impact on all Americans.

"Each one of us pays about \$1,000 annually for people suffering from alcohol and drug abuse," he said. In 1987, drug rehabilitation cost the United States \$201 billion.

Signs of drug abuse include mood changes, irritability, lack of motivation and denial of a drug problem, Reardon said.

The first step to help someone with a drug abuse problem is to get information from a professional, he said.

"That's what the Center for Drug Prevention and Education is here for," he said.

Reardon listed other ways to help drug abusers:

- Show concern for them and be involved.

- Don't challenge or accuse them, but let them know how their behavior affects others. It might even be necessary to avoid them, he said, especially when they are doing drugs.

Local hospital encourages 'smokeout'

By Denise Thompson
Staff Writer

The walking cigarette butt at Humana Hospital today may raise a few eyebrows, but the costume is meant to encourage smokers to quit the habit as part of The Great American Smokeout.

The employee disguised as a cigarette is only part of the hospital's "Nip it in the Butt" campaign. The main goal of the campaign is to keep employees cigarette-free for the day, and possibly forever, Nick Anderson, a public relations intern at Humana, said.

"Even though hospital employees know smoking is bad for them, there is a vast number of people in the hospital who smoke," Anderson said. "And this is one of the first places we need to stop it, because we're a role model for health care."

Humana is sponsoring three other activities to promote the Smo-

keout. A treasure hunt is the main event.

"During the treasure hunt, people will turn in their cigarettes in exchange for a treasure map and clues," Anderson said. "For example, they take the map and one of the clues could be, 'You'll breathe easier at this point,' and that would mean that they follow the map to respiratory therapy."

After successfully completing the treasure hunt, participants will be treated to a reception that will include a drawing for prizes.

"After the treasure hunt, they'll go to the reception where we'll serve them cold turkey sandwiches and drinks," he said. "Also, we'll draw names from a lottery made up of people who have successfully com-

pleted the treasure hunt and successfully refrained from smoking to see who wins the prizes."

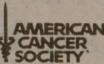
The hospital also is sponsoring an Adopt-A-Smoker program. Non-smoking hospital employees will "adopt" for the day an employee who smokes. The adopters provide smokers the moral support needed to refrain from smoking during the Smokeout, Anderson said.

"The adopters are supposed to do anything they can to keep their partners from smoking," he said. "They can provide little toys, or do something like handcuff them somewhere to keep them from smoking."

Humana also is sponsoring a program for babies who are born today, Anderson said.

"We are going to be giving all newborns in the hospital today a T-shirt that says, 'I was born a non-smoker,'" he said.

GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT



2 A&M students assaulted in CS

Two Texas A&M students were sexually assaulted in their College Station apartment early Tuesday morning by an unknown attacker.

The attacker, who reportedly had a gun, assaulted the women at about 3:30 a.m. in the Brownstone apartment complex.

College Station Police officers were dispatched to the the apartments at about 4 a.m. after receiving a report of a screaming woman being chased by a male with a gun.

The officers discovered that the attacker had entered the apartment and assaulted the woman.

The students were taken to Humana Hospital in College Station.

A police spokesman said the attacker was described as a 6-foot tall black man weighing 180 to 200 pounds.

He is 25 to 30 years old and was wearing a blue, black and gray flannel shirt and dark pants.

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