

# NEIGHBORS

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## SOAPBOX

### MIAMI-DADE ANTI-DRUG MESSAGE IS A STEP FORWARD

In response to an article by Susan Anasagasti [Anti-drug ads focus on Hispanic parents, April 18], I would like to comment on the relationship between cultural/ethnic advertising and drug use, and parental involvement and drug use.

First, there is a negative correlation between cultural influences and drug use — stronger ethnic identification can mean lower tendency to experiment in drugs. According to a recent NIDA-supported research study, cultural influences and ethnic identification may significantly influence adolescent drug use. The study suggested that adolescents who strongly identify with their communities and cultures are less vulnerable to risk factors for drug use and benefit more from protective factors than adolescents without identification.

These results strongly support the Bush administration's recently unveiled anti-drug initiative geared mainly to Hispanic youth and their parents.

Second, there is a negative correlation between parental involvement and drug use — stronger family interaction can mean lower inclination to abuse drugs. According to a similar NIDA research study to determine the extent parental influence plays on teen substance abuse also reinforces the fact that teen drinking and smoking does not occur in a vacuum.

Dr. Bruce Simons-Morton, lead author of the study, further observes that one way to help teens resist negative influences is by parents showing respect, keeping informed about their teen's life, and establishing clear behavioral expectations.

Therefore, connecting the anti-drug message to His-

panic parents and "encouraging them] to get more involved in their kids' lives" is certainly a step forward in reaching the Hispanic population.

However, it should not stop there. The parental involvement message should be geared to all parents. One organization that is doing just that is Informed Families/The Florida Family Partnership. Informed Families is working to ensure that parents and teens begin to take serious steps in accepting each other's responsibilities in the fight against drug, alcohol and tobacco. Through the "Safe Homes/Safe Parties" program, parents agree to sign pledges to set guidelines for their children's behavior and encourage drug-free and alcohol-free activities.

The challenge for organizations such as Little Havana's Abriendo Puertas and Informed Families is to find effective ways of reaching not only to the parents but also their children. Hopefully, the message will be well received by both parties no matter what language.

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