The French heritage, Catholic background and the people's joy of life in Acadiana may cause the rate of alcoholism in our community to be higher than the national average. In May, people in Acadiana who are addicted to alcohol and other mood-altering drugs will be able to seek treatment from the Chemical Dependency Unit of Acadiana.

The CDU of Acadiana will be a $4 million, 58-bed in-patient facility for adults. It will be located 1/4 miles north of I-10 on the Carencro Highway in Lafayette. The CDU of Acadiana is patterned after the unit in Baton Rouge.

Ridgeway emphasized that alcoholics can be treated. During the almost seven years of the Baton Rouge CUDU, he said 70 to 80 percent of the people who completed the program have abstained from drinking. Patients participating in the four-week, in-patient CDU program undergo a thorough medical and psychological work-up. In addition, patients also learn to re-establish a relationship with God. The disease causes a great deal of alienation from God, Ridgeway said. "These people have asked God for help and they feel He hasn't helped them. "We are not out to push religion. We want to help patients re-establish a relationship with God." During the final week of treatment, the patient meets with his family. The family then participates in therapy together, according to Ridgeway, because the children and spouses of alcoholics often suffer.

Effects On Children
Children of alcoholics might have one or four disfunctions, he explained. They are the family hero who strives to accomplish things in his life to compensate for his family life; the scapegoat who has temperament tantrums and is blamed for the family's problems; the lost child who forms a fantasy world to get away from the family situation; and the mascot or family clown who jokes to break family stress. "Two out of four children of alcoholics will either marry or become an alcohol," Ridgeway said. "The spouse is going halfway crazy after living with an alcoholic. She is generally the major problem or what we call the enabler. She helps maintain the status quo."

Treatment For Spouses
"The spouse also needs treatment. She fell in love with a person she felt was unique and keeps thinking that one day things will be better," Ridgeway said. "When a patient completes the program, he begins a two-year aftercare program. He then meets weekly with other former patients for support and guidance."

The program is closely related to the Alcoholics Anonymous concept, Ridgeway said. The concept is primarily treatments with psychological and behavioral approaches available in Lafayette. Cypress Hospital

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