Educators Urged To Join Fight Against Drugs

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Drug addiction and alcoholism are problems that exist in the public, private and parochial schools in Acadiana and educators must take an active role in helping students overcome these problems.

That is the opinion of Raymond Blanco, vice president of student affairs at USL. Blanco addressed academic leaders yesterday during a luncheon sponsored by the Chemical Dependency Unit of Acadiana.

“There is a great deal of debate about what our function is in dealing with these problems,” Blanco said. “If a person is going to be in education, there has to be something in it for them. It certainly is not the money. The something has to be the kids.”

Social Changers

“We hear it is not our function to be social changers. I believe that when the basic fabric of society begins to tear, every institution in this society must work to repair it.”

Blanco recalled the first time USL students were discovered smoking marijuana in an apartment complex near the campus. He said school officials and the public panicked.

Blanco contended that “the most sensible thing to do is to settle down and not panic.”

“When a kid starts using, there usually is a reason,” he said. “They need someone to take the time to find out the reason.

“Drugs and alcohol are not the problem, they become problems. We all need to use direct counseling. No one appreciates this more than the kids.”

Need For Love

Blanco maintained that drug users and alcoholics need to know that they are loved. He said educators should be people who care about the students and realize that they also have needs.

Currently, the closest place for young people, aged 13 to 17 years, to receive treatment is the adolescent unit of the Baton Rouge Chemical Dependency Unit.

The Baton Rouge CDU has both an adolescents and adult unit. The Chemical Dependency Unit of Acadiana, scheduled to open in May, is patterned after the Baton Rouge CDU. However, the Acadiana facility will initially treat only adults.

Understand The Risk

“Educators need to help young people understand that using chemicals is usually not good for them,” Vern Ridgeway, assistant vice president of the Baton Rouge CDU, told the gathering.

Ridgeway also quoted the following Baton Rouge adolescent CDU statistics to the educators: the mean age of first alcoholic drink is 12.3 years; the mean amount of alcoholic usage is 18.4 times per month; the mean age for first use of marijuana is 12.9 years; and the mean amount of marijuana usage is 26.1 times per month.