Moeller makes career of AIDS-awareness crusade

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Staff Writer

Upon retiring this spring, Wayne Moeller, assistant to the dean of business administration, will not be partaking of rest and relaxation as many retirees do. Rather, he will embark on yet another full-time occupation.

AIDS education is the next career for the 65-year-old, who has been active in AIDS awareness since 1988.

Moeller has been at USL for 33 years, formerly as a faculty member in business administration and currently as an administrative assistant. After business hours he acts as Chairperson for the Board of Directors at Lafayette C.A.R.E.S. (Concern for AIDS Relief, Education and Support).

Moeller said of his involvement in AIDS awareness that, “It’s getting to be almost a full-time job in itself, especially since Magic Johnson came out with his announcement of his infection.”

Moeller said he became interested in AIDS education after friends encouraged him to become involved in Lafayette C.A.R.E.S., a volunteer service at University Medical Center. Moeller said he did not intend to become strongly committed to the C.A.R.E.S. program, initially performing simple tasks such as typing.

“Of course one thing led to another, and I became totally committed to it,” said Moeller.

“We have had a number of students in the past who have had AIDS and died. I guess that was one of the things that got me involved, too,” he added.

Moeller described a past situation of a student with AIDS who had to resign from the university with Moeller’s help as a result of the extent of his affliction. Moeller said he became more interested in AIDS after talking with the student’s family.

Moeller began working with Lafayette C.A.R.E.S. in 1987 and became involved in AIDS awareness the following year. Since then, he has worked in several areas of the AIDS program including administration, education, counseling and public relations. Moeller also conducts AIDS-education lectures for various USL classes upon request.

In addition, Moeller helped write the Ryan White grant, which assists clients who are HIV positive with their cases.

“UMC has been designated as one of the four hospitals in the state to provide ambulatory care for the indigents (poverty stricken). Up until recently, practically everyone in the state had to go to New Orleans for treatment,” he explained. “We have money for direct client assistance—medicine, help them with their utilities, help them with their rent and things like that... eventually we will have a full clinic here at UMC.”

Moeller said he supports AIDS education in secondary schools.

“It’s my feeling that the basic education needs to start very, very early,” he said. Moeller said he believes that children should be taught about germs and basic hygiene at young ages. “Then as they mature, I think more and more should be brought into it. I think that probably the kids hear all this on T.V.... they’re curious about it and many of them may be more ready to receive education than many people think they are. I think they’re ready for the information much before the 10th or 11th grade.”

Moeller said he supports former Surgeon General C. Everett Coop’s opinion that AIDS awareness should begin at the kindergarten level.

“You don’t have to get into the modes of transmission. Begin teaching them about their immune system and hygiene as a way of warding off any kind of infection,” Moeller said.

“The problem with AIDS education and sex education in Louisiana is it’s left up to the individual school districts,” he said. Moeller added that one of the barriers of such education, particularly in the Lafayette district, is that the program must be approved by a parental committee. He said that an AIDS-education program was established last spring in the public school system for science classes, but that parental permission was required, limiting the number of students who could participate in the class.

“We are making progress for sex education,” he said. “It will be covered in health classes, home-ec or family living classes, and the AIDS program will still be in the science classes as I understand it.”

In spite of all the public information about AIDS, Moeller still encounters misunderstanding from surprising sources.

“One of the faculty members told my secretary that he was uncomfortable going to the partnership meeting, because he was afraid I would give him AIDS. It was kind of hilarious,” Moeller said.

Although Moeller is not offended by the gesture, he said he is concerned about the misinformation it represents.

“It bothers me in that we have had good AIDS education on T.V. now for four or five years, and educated people still are not aware of the truth and the facts,” said Moeller.

For more information about AIDS call 232-AIDS or contact Moeller at his office in Martin Hall Room 243.