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Fred L. Boyd

From left, Craig Yaldoo, director of the state's Office of Drug Control Policy; Doreen Turk-White, executive director of the Empowerment Zone Coalition; and U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Collins.

Guest columnist

Addiction not fashion statement

By Deborah A. Culp / Special to The Detroit News

Fourteen and a half years ago, no one could have convinced me that there was a war on drugs and that I was knee-deep in it.

I was an addict caught in a chemical war just as deadly as a world or Middle Eastern war, if not worse.

But, after years of personal and family degradation and physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bankruptcy, God allowed me a second chance and sent messengers to show me the way out.

That is why it was particularly gratifying to attend a recent Empowerment Zone Coalition 2002 Substance Abuse Summit at the Detroit Yacht Club on Belle Isle that literally had a standing-room-only audience.

Community leaders, politicians, churches, businesses, supporting agencies and other organizations listened and shared their views and solutions to the problem of substance abuse and the relentless war on drugs during networking sessions and select workshops.

The Rev. Marvin Winans, the master of ceremonies, and U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Collins commended the following for such a successful and informative summit

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collaboration: Doreen Turk-White, executive director of the Empowerment Zone Coalition; Craig J. Yaldao, director of the Office of Drug Control Policy; and Dr. Calvin R. Trent, director of the Detroit Health Department Bureau of Substance Abuse and co-chairman of the Partnership for a Drug Free Detroit, among others.

On the international scene, fashion designer Christian Dior has launched a massive advertising campaign to market his latest clothing line, makeup and fragrance, called "Dior Addict," complete with its own Web site, www.dior-addict.com, and state-of-the-art, no-expense-spared marketing and public relations tactics. The noted designer took no prisoners and trampled the dignity and hard work of numerous people fighting addiction.

"Faces and Voices of Recovery," an organization that supports drug and alcohol recovery, has coordinated a diverse, nationwide counter campaign called "Addiction is Not Fashionable." On Oct. 21, a press conference was broadcast from coast to coast in protest of what I believe amounts to capitalistic madness.

The organizers of the local conference I attended, Benjamin Jones, president of the Michigan National Council of Alcohol & Drug Dependence/Impact, and Andre Johnson, program manager of the Partnership for A Drug Free Detroit, said the Dior Addict campaign should be stopped, the products renamed and all negative, nonproductive advertising should be pulled immediately.

At best, the Dior Addict campaign trivializes the critical public health issue of alcohol, drugs and other addictions, cheapens and devalues the hard work of recovery as a whole, and shows careless, blatant disregard for the feelings of parents or guardians who have lost a child to the grasps of addiction.

Statistics reveal daily that substance abuse and addictions of any kind have no financial, academic, racial, ethical, or cultural barriers. No one is exempt.

The saddest part of all is that Christian Dior has no intention of pulling the ads, canceling or rerouting the Dior Addict campaign.

This is a blight in the land of the free and the home of the brave. If someone came out with a line of clothing, make up or fragrance called "Dior HIV Aids" or "Dior Cancer," it couldn't be any worse.

Frontline health care providers, members of the media and the fashion industry, policy-makers, churches and, of course, the recovering communities are encouraged to begin an e-mail and letter-writing campaign to stop this madness.

Interested? Write Dr. Calvin Trent and Andre Johnson at the Partnership for a Drug Free Detroit/Advocacy Committee, 1151 Taylor, Room 417C, Detroit, MI 48202, or call (313) 876-4048. You may also write Dr. Benjamin Jones, NCADD/Impact, 16647 Wyoming, Detroit, MI 48221, or call (313) 341-9891.

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