

# Barrow battles alcohol abuse with four-point plan

by Brandon Wilson

Barrow Mayor Nathaniel O'Leary, with the approval of the city council has pronounced that the week of

Oct. 18-24 will be recognized as "Alcohol Awareness Week" in Barrow.

The pronouncement, in cooperation with the North Slope

Borough alcoholism program stresses the alternatives to alcohol and drug abuse, for increased understanding, concern and according to Ole-

man, "for renewed efforts to reduce and prevent the causes of alcoholism and drug abuse."

Barrow has come a long way toward self-help during the year in its struggle to curb alcoholism, alcohol abuse, and its effects on the community. According to Steve Krajeir, director of the North Slope Borough Alcoholism Program, the present plan includes five phases of treatment and counseling.

The first part of the present program consists of a drop-in center called "Friendship House." This center handles clients on an out-patient basis in a home environment. The center also holds "sober fellowship," supplies alcohol information and referral. The services are free and totally confidential. The "House" is open from 6 p.m. to 1:30 a.m., Tuesday through Saturday.

The second important part of the current program is a "court diversion program." This alcohol education series is held one night each week for two hours and lasts four weeks. According to Krajeir, the program receives about 30 referrals per month from the local court, and attendance at these sessions is sometimes offered in lieu of jail sentences. This program is open to the public as well.

An equally important part of the present treatment program is "outreach." In their "outreach" function, counselors report regularly to the Public Safety Office and to the local hospital to counsel people who are there as a result of their drinking or drug abuse and to generally "raise their consciousness."

A weekly aspect of the program is the radio alcoholism awareness program which is featured on Thursday nights on KBRW radio in Barrow. The program features a listener

call-in format which is broadcast throughout the North Slope. The program is a six-week series and is planned to start again early this month.

The final, and newest phase of the treatment plan is the residential program which will begin in the spring of 1982.

On Aug. 4, the North Slope Borough Assembly appropriated \$2,029,000 to renovate, equip and supply the former Public Safety Building, which will be leased from the city. It will contain an 8-bed short-term residential unit and a 6-bed 12-hour voluntary "sleep-off" space. This facility will provide a much needed local treatment area for the city and the entire North Slope.

The state and community of Barrow have shown positive support of these treatment and prevention programs. State financial support has grown from \$81,700 to \$300,000 since March. Local support has come in the way of "in-kind" matching funds. The Barrow Mother's Club also has donated \$1,000 to the cause.

Positive individual response to the programs has already become evident. Participation in the programs has increased. Krajeir states that "about 215 clients have gone through the 'Friendship House' program during the first six months." He feels that the success of the programs is due to the support of the community, the basic needs, new services available, hours of operation and the fiscal support gathered from all agencies involved.

Barrow has made good progress in fighting alcohol abuse; one of those problems frequently brought on by the availability of drugs, and changing lifestyles, and attitudes. Only time, education, alternatives and continued community support will make alcohol abuse a vestige of the past.