



Staff Photo By George King

PATSY WATKINS OF MARIETTA CITY PTA (L) AND IRA L. DELOACH OF STATEWIDE MINORITY TASK FORCE EXAMINE DISPLAY
 The Two Were Part Of Group Attending One-Day Seminar On Drug Abuse Monday In Schools Sponsored By Cobb County School System

Fighting Drug Abuse

School Officials Discuss Role In Solving Problem

By **POLLY WARREN**
 Staff Writer

Cobb County school officials have taken the first step in solving drug abuse problems by publicly admitting they exist.

Spurred by school board member Carolyn Duncan, the educators gathered more than 20 civic, medical, psychiatric, law enforcement,

business and legislative professionals into the South Cobb Drive transportation facility Monday.

The day began with presentations from each group on its fight against drug abuse and ended with large and small discussions on what the schools' role should be.

Dr. Robert Margolis, represent-

ing Ridgeview Institute, a non-profit psychiatric hospital in Smyrna, told the group, "It's time to coordinate our efforts."

"I've been saying for five years it's time for parents to stop pointing fingers at the schools, the schools at the courts and the courts at the legislature," he added.

He also reminded the group,

"We can't leave the kids behind ... we've got to enlist the support of the kids."

After the almost five hour meeting Monday, Mrs. Duncan said she and school officials will be shifting through all the information garnered Monday. The likely result will be the formation of a task force, on a somewhat smaller scale than the 50-person attendance Monday.

Mrs. Duncan said she sees the schools' role as a coordinator for the various programs, but primarily in an educational vein.

"Like teaching the three R's, we've got to start teaching the don'ts," the mother of a drug abuser said.

Responding to a point blank question from schools Superintendent Dr. Tom Tocco on whether there is a drug problem in the schools, Cobb County drug undercover agent Sgt. Rick Tucker said the only gauge has been an undercover drug operation in two county high schools last year.

In that six-month investigation, a 22-year agent posed as a high school student and made more than 20 drug arrests.

Cable Producer, Medical Examiner Eye Drug Abuse Film Set In Morgue

By **POLLY WARREN**
 Staff Writer

Some Cobb County students may take a video tape trip to the morgue or literally be "thrown in jail" soon in an attempt to emphasize the harmful effects of drugs.

To show the "end result," medical examiner Dr. Joseph Burton and Don Yow, a Marietta cable television producer, are coordinating efforts to produce a video tape treatment of drug abuse.

The two men talked about the project at Monday's drug abuse seminar hosted by the Cobb County Board of Education.

Dr. Burton said the video tape production, which would be set in a morgue, is being discussed but has proceeded no further.

The film would show what happens to the various

organs, such as the heart and liver, from drug abuse.

Dr. Burton said he has used a similar type of slide show in the past while talking with student groups and it has been successful.

However, right now the medical examiner does not have a full morgue in Cobb County and has no assistant. Until he has more help, Dr. Burton said his time will be limited to work on the project.

Drug prevention programs may talk about the consequences, but "no one really shows them someone it has happened to," the medical examiner for Cobb and DeKalb counties said.

Yow, a former mortician, said he left that profession due to the emotional pressure in lowering 12 to 15 young people every month "into mother earth."

See MORGUE, Page 8A

See DRUG ABUSE, Page 8A

Drug Abuse Seminar

Continued From Page 1A

Judging from that, Tucker said, "there is definitely a problem with drugs in and around schools on a daily basis."

Since the beginning of this year, Cobb's 24-member drug unit has made 155 cases against drug dealers and seized \$4 million worth of drugs.

School board member Duff Greene also touched on the monetary lure posed by the \$6 billion a year business in the state of Georgia.

"Substantial, nice people in this community are making quick bucks" and abdicating their responsibility, he said. Drug financing is treated as nothing more harmful than stock speculation, he charged.

Given that most dealers receive probation on their first and second offenses, Greene said "a lot of people would sell their soul for a \$100,000 probation."

He suggested the board of education host a drug awareness seminar in the Cobb Civic Center.

Mrs. Duncan concurs that the schools need to help the ones least informed — the parents.

However, she said the stigma attached to attending drug meetings

needs to be overcome. Some parents still view it as a "leper's disease," she said.

Barbara Kretzmer, of Unified Parents of Cobb County, added, "You can put on all the programs you want, and you still haven't broken that attitude."

For the youngsters, drugs have become a "lifestyle," according to Dr. Ron Milestone, who has a private psychiatric practice in Marietta.

"There are freaks, jocks, scholars or nerds. Fitting in is very important to the adolescent," he said.

Being accepted and low self-esteem again turned up as key words in two students from STRAIGHT, a drug rehabilitation program, who joined the meeting. Pam, a 17-year-old who started using drugs in the seventh grade, and Allen, 17, who started at 10, both found "feeling good" about themselves and having a better self image as their goals in getting off drugs.

Pam and Allen are the lucky ones, according to statistics by Cobb medical examiner Dr. Joseph Burton. Of the 600 deaths a year in Cobb County, Burton says 25 percent are drug related. He added he is seeing an increasing percentage of teenage deaths related to drugs in the suicide and accidental categories.