



## Don't abandon right way to battle drugs

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You see it in the face of the anguished mother, weeping over a rifled jewelry box, knowing it was her son who robbed her again to buy his drugs.

You see it in the emergency room, doctors working frantically to bring life back to the teen girl whose heart was stopped by an overdose of drugs.

You see it in the booking rooms of police stations, as handcuffed drug dealers and drug users face the prospect of many years in prison.

You see it in the blood spilled in violent-drug-related crime.

And we just don't see this go away. The damage of drug use and addiction -- shattered families, overdoses, crime -- continues to pile up.

On Wednesday, police said that they had dismantled a major cocaine trafficking ring in DuPage County. A task force of local, state and federal officers made 24 arrests and seized cocaine worth \$408,600 in "Operation Scratch Off."

And just the day before this drug bust was announced, 23-year-old John Rosales of Naperville was found dead in a pool of blood. Police said he was a victim of "a robbery of drugs gone bad." Five men face murder charges in the shooting.

We can be thankful that such drug crimes are isolated in DuPage County, not an ever-present threat to public safety as is the case in too many fear-filled communities in our country.

But we know, from our own reporting through the years, that drug abuse is nonetheless a serious problem in the suburbs.

We also know that the good police work we saw last week in DuPage County that takes dealers off streets, coupled with treatment of those who have succumbed to addiction, is the best approach to gaining some control of the drug problem.

Yet, President Bush, in his 2009 budget, has proposed substantial cuts in drug and alcohol treatment. This is according to Faces & Voices of Recovery, a national drug treatment advocacy organization.

And last month, the Illinois State Police reported that state and local drug task forces have seen a steady reduction in federal funding since 2002. In 2004, these task forces received \$3.5 million. By last December, funding had been cut 67 percent, to \$924,000.

The attitude of "get by with less" implicit in these funding cuts certainly offers encouragement to dealers, knowing there will be fewer police out to bust them and more customers looking for them as treatment options close.

If there is still a "War on Drugs," it can't be fought when the ammunition of law enforcement and treatment isn't being replenished. It will just mean more empty jewelry boxes, more bodies being taken from emergency rooms to funeral parlors and more drug-related crime, with police officers frustrated over not having all they need to do something about it.