

# High school drug summit

## Rep. Kirk, dignitaries pledge to fight against club drugs

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Red Ribbon Week at Wheeling High School got off to an historic start Monday as an international pact to reduce the flow of drugs in the United States was signed and a White House representative asked students to help fight against substance abuse.

Red Ribbon Week is celebrated every year at the high school and is a national program. Wheeling High School Principal Dorothy Sievert said the week's activities include students making pledges to live a drug-free life.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-10th, appeared at the school with John Walters, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Joining them was Belgian Ambassador Frans van Daele and Dutch Ambassador Boudewijn Van Eenennaam. Kirk, Daele and Van Eenennaam signed a "road map" outlining the commitments of all three countries to reduce the trafficking of synthetic, or club, drugs. The symbolic signing was done as a show of good faith between the three countries.

Kirk said about 90 percent of all club drugs, like Ecstasy, coming into the United States is transported through Belgium and the Netherlands.

"One of the fastest growing dangers is club drugs," Kirk said. "This is an instance where foreign policy can be used to help defend Americans here at home."

Van Eenennaam and Daele agreed the best way to help stop the trafficking of these drugs is by different nations working together.

"We want to work on all points of the conveyor belt — from production to consumption," Daele said. "This can only be achieved through multina-

tional cooperation."

Daele explained Belgium is particularly attractive to drug traffickers because of its open borders with neighboring countries and its variety of transportation facilities, especially through the city of Antwerp, which is the fifth-largest port in the world.

Both ambassadors said they were pleased and eager to work with the United States to reduce the flow of club drugs. According to the road map signed, both countries pledged to put more money and resources into stopping the shipment of club drugs and strengthen laws against their transportation and production. The United States has pledged to provide training and intelligence to both countries.

"Many of you might think I am not feeling happy to be here; that I might be on the defensive," Van Eenennaam said, referring to the amount of drugs shipped through his country. "That is not the case. I am using this opportunity to take the offensive. It is the only way to deal with this problem."

Walters, who is better known as the White House drug czar, said Ecstasy use is declining as more people become aware of its effects and dangers. He said use among high school seniors nationwide is down 20 percent from last year. He also said Chicago emergency room cases of Ecstasy overdoses have dropped from 215 in 2000 to 87 in 2002.

Walters said the popularity of club drugs rose steadily through the late 1990s, and the message to not use them needs to be reiterated to combat the "lies" of club-drug use.

"Those lies are that it's safe, it's fun, everybody does it and it won't hurt you," he said. "With those attitudes, we are only going to have more casualties."

Walters also asked for the

help of Wheeling High School's student body during an assembly held the same morning. He said students have the power to help their peers stay away from drugs if they have the courage to do it.

"Drug addiction is a disease, and denial is part of that disease," he said. "Those who have the disease will resist (help). It

takes courage to tell them what they're doing is wrong. It doesn't take courage to follow along."

Kate Patton of Rolling Meadows also spoke at the assembly.

Her 23-year-old daughter, Kelly, died of an Ecstasy overdose in November 1999. Patton said she had never heard of Ec-

stasy when police officers knocked on her door to tell her Kelly was dead.

"I'm here to put a face to the devastation," Patton said. "Ecstasy doesn't care. It has no discrimination. It has no boundaries as to who uses it. You have choices, and I'm asking you to make the right choices."