

Unhooked

East Palo Alto group works toward a drug-free environment

By Mary T. Fortney
Times Tribune staff

East Palo Alto's younger generation is working to create an "unhooked generation," using catchy radio commercials and marketing techniques to keep teen-agers from using drugs.

The term "unhooked generation" comes from a song of the same name written by Oakland lyricist Naazim Abdul Hamed. It means the youths are unhooked from marijuana, alcohol and cocaine.

The Unhooked Generation also is the name of a non-profit organization founded by three East Palo Alto residents, all in their early 30s.

The chief executive officer of

the organization is Sam Mustafa, an East Palo Alto police officer; the chief operations officer is Earl Robinson, a field service engineer with Northern Telecom Corp.; and the chief financial officer is Lola Phillips, a departmental supervisor for Syntex Laboratories.

All have families and are concerned about the environment in which their children are growing up.

Teen-agers in East Palo Alto see drug dealers driving around in \$30,000 Porsches, Robinson said. It influences whether they look for a \$5-an-hour job or decide to sell crack.

"Our maiden voyage will be Saturday," Mustafa said. "We are going to let the community know

we're out to work."

On Saturday morning, a team of volunteers will survey 100 families to explore the needs of the community. Following that, a reception will be held in the City Council chambers at 2415 University Ave., from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., to explain to the public and prospective volunteers what the organization is about.

In an interview Wednesday, Mustafa and Robinson detailed their philosophy and plans for the Unhooked Generation.

Friendship between the two dates back to high school days when they played football together at Sequoia High School in Redwood City.

"We could have moved out of

East Palo Alto, and said, 'That's your problem,' Robinson said.

Instead, Mustafa, Robinson and Phillips put their heads together to plot how to improve the city, which they describe as a "fantastic community, even if it has problems."

Their first meeting was on July 5, 1986. Now they're ready to go.

Their approach will focus on the positive, aiming to keep youngsters off drugs rather than waiting until they are hooked. However, their multifaceted program also includes a treatment center for drug users.

Religion is a key part of the program, but Mustafa said it is "religion in a general sense of a way of

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Sam Mustafa
... a drug-free generation.

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life, reflected in a healthy environment and productive people."

There's an ecumenical base to this organization: Mustafa is Muslim and Phillips is Buddhist. Robinson, a Christian, is a member of the Grace Temple Church of God in Christ in East Palo Alto.

The group also is family-oriented in the sense of the community as a family. The organizers said they believe parents should be responsible not only for their own children, but for other people's children, too.

The Unhooked Generation will focus on infants to 19-year-olds, with the hope of establishing a drug-free generation.

The group plans to use marketing techniques to catch the attention of teen-agers. One aspect will be radio and television commercials featuring a song that goes:

"We're the UHG, the unhooked generation;

"We don't puff;

"We don't pop;

"We don't shoot;
"We don't snort;
"We don't drink and we're happy."

A planned student motivation program is aimed at interesting teen-agers in careers and introducing them to role models. Field trips would be used to expose youngsters to different environments.

Another aspect of the program will be the establishment of a child care center where special attention would be paid to the needs of children of drug users.

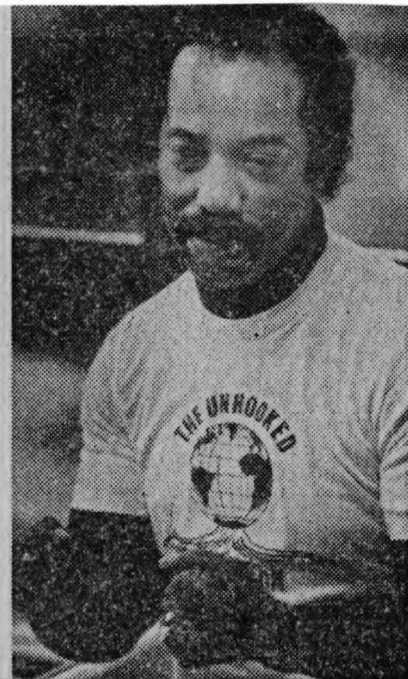
Also planned is a treatment center for drug users, to be located in East Palo Alto.

Mustafa said he believes it is essential that drug users be treated in their own community where they can learn to withstand the temptations of the ever-present drugs.

All the above will take money, and the organization is preparing proposals for grants and searching for other sources of funding.

At present, it's still a small group, consisting of the three organizers, five project directors and a small number of volunteers.

The organization has been endorsed by the NAACP and the Ministerial Alliance of East Palo Alto.



Earl Robinson
... creating positive environment.

Mustafa said the group, while doing its own thing, will support the program organized by COPE to fight drugs.

"The need is so vast there is no competition, only work," he said.