



## + warning signs

"Every parent knows their child," Corcoran-Walsh says. "When there is a shift, something is going on." Here are a few signs that your teen may have an alcohol or drug problem.

- [ ] School grades drop
- [ ] Skipping classes
- [ ] Personality changes
- [ ] Mood swings
- [ ] Hanging with a new group of friends
- [ ] Extreme withdrawal
- [ ] Extreme aggression or outbursts

show them that they haven't destroyed it, then you have something to work with."

She and Chris, who earned his degree in nursing, launched an adult treatment facility in 2002, sold it, and opened another one (the Cove Center for Recovery) in 2008. But the more people called with issues regarding their teens, the more Corcoran-Walsh realized that there was a need not being met. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1.5 million youth, ages 12–17, required treatment for an alcohol issue in 2006. Only 101,000 received help at a specialty facility, in part, because such centers are few and far between.

Corcoran-Walsh designed the program at Inspirations (a staff of master's-level therapists work with the teens) to address the present and the future of the teen addict. In addition to focusing on continued education, the minimum 90-day residential facility emphasizes living skills—each youth is responsible for cooking, laundry and shopping. They also re-enter the real world, participating in outdoor activities, going to the movies and much more.

"Chris and I worked in a secluded facility, and we found that the patients who relapsed, most often, were those who weren't ready to deal with the outside world," she says. "We bring the world to the teens and make sure they are engaging in it. ... We want them to use the tools available and make healthy choices."

—KEVIN KAMINSKI

## Karen Corcoran-Walsh

● CO-FOUNDER, INSPIRATIONS TEEN ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTER

What shocks Karen Corcoran-Walsh isn't that teenagers all over the country are in crisis. It's that no one, she feels, knows what to do about it.

"We have a national epidemic with drugs and alcohol," she says. "But I don't think any child has to die at the hands of [those substances]. We have to address this."

As founders of Inspirations, a residential treatment facility specifically for teens in Fort Lauderdale (with an outpatient center in Boca), Corcoran-Walsh and husband Chris Walsh are doing their part by helping adolescents facing abuse and addiction issues to reclaim their lives.

Those issues are escalating due to, among other things, the ease with which teens have

access to prescription medication. At local "pharm" parties, high schoolers bring pills from their parents' medicine cabinet and dump them into a large bowl. "It looks like a bowl of jelly beans," Corcoran-Walsh says. Teens then grab unidentified pills and ingest them. Other times, they'll crush the pills and either snort, smoke or inject the powder. In the case of OxyContin, this has led to heart attacks when the pain medication, meant as a time-release drug, quickly reaches the bloodstream.

"Not one teen has come into our treatment center saying they had no hopes for their future," says the former schoolteacher, who earned her master's degree in 2002 from Nova Southeastern University in marriage and family therapy. "Every child has a dream. If you can