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Metro

6-Year-Old's Md. Home Was a Modern-Day Opium Den

First of two articles

By Michele L. Norris
Washington Post Staff Writer

Dooney Waters, a thickset 6-year-old missing two front teeth, sat hunched over a notebook, drawing a family portrait.

First he sketched a stick-figure woman smoking a pipe twice her size. A coil of smoke rose from the pipe, which held a white square he called a "rock." Above that, he drew a picture of himself, another stick figure with tears falling from his face. "Drugs have wrecked my mother,"

Dooney said as he doodled. "Drugs have wrecked a lot of mothers and fathers and children and babies. If I don't be careful, drugs are going to wreck me too."

His was a graphic rendering of the life of a child growing up in what police and social service workers have identified as a crack house, an apartment in Landover where people congregated to buy and use drugs. Dooney's life was punctuated by days when he hid behind his bed to eat sandwiches sent by teachers who knew he would get nothing else. Nights when Dooney wet his bed because people were "yelling and doing drugs and stuff." And weeks in which he

barely saw his 32-year-old mother, who spent most of her time searching for drugs.

"My mother don't take care of me," Dooney said during an interview in late May. "All she want is drugs."

Addie Lorraine Waters, who described herself as a "slave to cocaine," said she let drug dealers use her apartment in exchange for the steady support of her habit. The arrangement turned Dooney's home into a modern-day opium den where pipes, spoons and needles were in supply like ketchup and straws at a fast-food restaurant.

This series is based on interviews with Dooney and his mother, who opened their

home to a Washington Post reporter and photographer over a two-month period, and on interviews with relatives, teachers, social workers and others familiar with the Waterses' circumstances.

The apartment was on Capital View Drive, site of more than a dozen slayings last year. Yet, the locks were removed from the front door to allow an unyielding tide of addicts and dealers to flow in and out. Children, particularly toddlers, commonly peered inside to ask: "Is my mommy here?" or "Have you seen my mommy?"

See VICTIM, A22, Col. 1

In late May, Dooney's father moved him out of the Prince George's County apartment. He now lives in the District with his father, a federal government employee who asked not to be identified.

"I just couldn't let him stay in a place like that," said Dooney's father, who has been separated from Dooney's mother for three years and served prison time for a drug conviction. "There was no one watching over him."

While he was living in the crack house, Dooney was burned when a woman tossed boiling water at his mother's face in a drug dispute, and his right palm was singed when his 13-year-old half brother handed him a soft drink can that had been used to heat crack cocaine on the stove.

Teachers said that Dooney often begged to be taken to their homes, once asking if he could stay overnight in his classroom. "I'll sleep on the floor," Dooney told an instructor in Greenbelt Center Elementary School's after-school counseling and tutorial program. "Please don't make me go home. I don't want to go back there."

Dooney was painfully shy or exhaustively outgoing, depending largely upon whether he was at home or in school—the one place where he could relax. In class, he played practical jokes on friends and passed out kisses and hugs to teachers. But his mood darkened when he boarded a bus for home. In Washington Heights, a community of federally subsidized apartments, he invariably plodded around with his chin on his chest, dragging his feet and sucking his thumb.

The violence that surrounded Dooney at home was, in most cases, a byproduct of the bustling drug trade. Washington Heights was host to one of the county's largest open-air drug markets until a series of police raids last winter drove the problem indoors, spawning several interior drug centers like the one where Dooney lived.

On Saturday, April 29, Dooney was sitting in the living room near his mother when a 15-year-old drug dealer burst in and tossed a pan of boiling water, a weapon that anybody with a stove could afford. Dooney, his mother and two neighbors recalled that the

dealer then plopped down on a sofa and watched as Dooney's weeping mother soothed the burns on her shoulder and neck. Dooney also was at home when another adolescent enforcer leaned through an open window on Sunday, May 14, and pitched a blend of bleach and boiling water in the face of 19-year-old Clifford E. Bernard, a regular in the apartment. The right side of Bernard's face became a twisted mass of pink and brown scars, the price for ignoring a \$150 debt.

"People around here don't play when you owe them money," said Sherry Brown, 25, a friend of Addie Waters who frequents the apartment. "These young boys around here will burn you in a minute if you so much as look at them the wrong way. I'm telling you sure as I'm sitting here, crack has made people crazy," said Brown, who said she smokes crack every day and has given birth to two crack-addicted babies in the last three years.

Almost everyone was welcome at "Addie's place." Her patrons included some unlikely characters, but as one said, "Addie don't turn nobody away." Not the 15-year-old who in May burned her furniture and clothing intentionally with a miniature blow torch. Not even the 21-year-old man who "accidentally" shot her 13-year-old son, Frank Russell West, five inches above the heart on Dec. 16. Police ascribed the shooting to a "drug deal gone bad."

Dooney was sleeping when Russell, shot in the left shoulder, stumbled back into the apartment. Dooney will not talk about the night his brother was shot except to say, "Russell was shot 'cause of drugs." His mother said that Dooney watched quietly, sucking his thumb as she wept and rocked her oldest son in her arms while they waited for an ambulance.

Waters did not press charges against Edward "June" Powell, the man police charged with shooting Russell. Powell, whose trial has been continued because he did not have an attorney, is out on bail. "He didn't mean to do it," said Waters, who still refers to Powell as a close friend of the family. "It was an accident. He meant to kill someone else."

Russell, who still pals around with Powell, also described the shooting as something that "wasn't that serious." Russell moved out of his mother's apartment in January because, he said, he was tired of the crowds in the apartment and his mother's chronic drug use.

Dooney considered Russell "lucky" at the time. "I'd leave too but I can't," Dooney said in May. Dooney did leave the apartment shortly after that statement and since then has become more outgoing, less irritable. But, like the burn scar that covers his shoulder, some memories may not fade.

"He saw so much while he was lying there [in Washington Heights] that I'm afraid he will never totally get over it," Dooney's father said.

The door that leads to Waters's apartment was riddled with holes that once held locks, gaps that were usually stuffed with wads of paper or balled-up socks. The walls in the living room were painted bright blue, a shade common to sports uniforms and soap packages. Holes ranging from the size of quarters to frying pans pockmarked nearly each wall. Most were the product of conflict. One cavernous hole that revealed the cinder

block behind was kicked in during an argument between a drug addict and his girlfriend. Smaller punctures in the hall were the result of two addicts charging each other with broomsticks.

Brush strokes of white paint appeared at indiscriminate spots on the walls, and graffiti was scrawled in crayon and nail polish. No books or clocks were in evidence. People told time by watching the sun or the television sets that came and went as barter for drugs. The kitchen was littered with bottles and fast-food wrappers, and the refrigerator was a storehouse for half-eaten fried chicken, cupcakes and other molding items. Dead cockroaches occupied refrigerator egg holders, and mold grew along the sides of the sink.

The smell of rot in the kitchen and the odor from the backed-up toilet were somewhat camouflaged by a cloud of drug and cigarette smoke. Dooney often walked through the apartment flapping his hands and spitting phrases like "Yuk!" or "P.U.!" "I hate smoke," Dooney said one evening, before launching into a mock coughing fit. Waters and her friends laughed at Dooney's performance and continued smoking cigarettes.

Dooney's mother and others who congregated in her apartment were bound by a common desperation for drugs. The majority, in their late twenties or early thirties, described themselves as "recreational" drug users until they tried the highly addictive crack. Many said they had swapped welfare checks, food stamps, furniture and sexual favors to support their craving for crack. They had lost jobs, spouses, homes and self-respect. Nearly all were in danger of losing children, too.

The Prince George's County Department of Social Services was investigating charges of parental neglect against many of the people who frequented Waters's apartment. But they rarely took the county's investigations seriously. Some would joke about timid caseworkers who were too "yellow" to visit Washington Heights or would pass around letters in which officials

threatened to remove children from their custody. The problem, as in Dooney's case, was that the county's threats lacked teeth. Caseworkers were usually so overloaded that they rarely had time to bring cases to court, even after they had corroborated charges of abuse and neglect.

Prince George's County police said they know about Waters's operation but have never found enough drugs in the apartment to charge her or others. "The problem is that drugs don't last long up there," said Officer Alex Bailey, who patrols the Washington Heights neighborhood. "They use them up as soon as they arrive."

Such explanations seemed lost on Dooney.

"Everybody knows about the drugs at my house," he said with a matter-of-fact tone not common to a first-grader. Each sentence was accompanied by an adult-like gesture. One second he threw his right palm in the air, the next moment the hand slammed down on his desktop and his eyes rolled up toward the top of his forehead. "The police know, too, but they don't do nothing about it. Don't nobody do nothing about it," he said.

Police did raid Dooney's apartment on Saturday, May 13, after they were called there by a neighbor who complained about noise. "They were looking for the drugs," Dooney said during an interview two days later as his eyes grew full of tears. "They

took all the clothes out of my mother's closets. They threw it all on my mother. They called my mother names."

Dooney also said he was afraid of the police, and when asked why, he inquired, "How do you spell the word 'shoot'?" Supplied with a notebook and pen, he wrote the word slowly in large, shaky letters and then repeatedly punched the pen into the paper to form a circle of black marks. Pausing a minute, he drew a person holding a pipe, a smiling face atop a body with a circle in her belly. "That's my mother," Dooney said, pointing to the figure's face. He moved his finger toward the circle. "And that's a bullet hole."

Around the apartment, Dooney was constantly on guard, watchful for signs of a ruckus or a raid. "Don't stand too close," he told a visitor standing near the front door, warning that the lockless door was often kicked open.

Since kindergarten, Dooney has pulled himself out of bed almost every school morning without the help of adults or alarm clocks, said his mother, who boasts about his independence. Asked how he gets himself up in the morning, Dooney tapped a finger to his forehead and said, "My brain wakes me up. I get up when it gets light outside."

Dooney rarely bathed or brushed his hair before he went to school while he was living with his mother. The bathroom was inoperable during the period that The Washington Post regularly visited. The toilet overflowed with human waste. Stagnant water stood in the bathtub. There was no soap, no shampoo, no toilet paper or toothpaste.

When Dooney did wash, he used a yellow dishpan that doubled as a washtub for rinsing out his clothes. Without a working toilet in the apartment, Dooney went across the hall when he needed to use the bathroom. If he couldn't wait, or if the neighbors weren't home, Dooney went outside in the bushes or urinated in the bathtub. He reasons that this is the root of his bed-wetting. "I didn't want to get up [at night] to go to the bathroom and now I pee in my bed every night," he said.

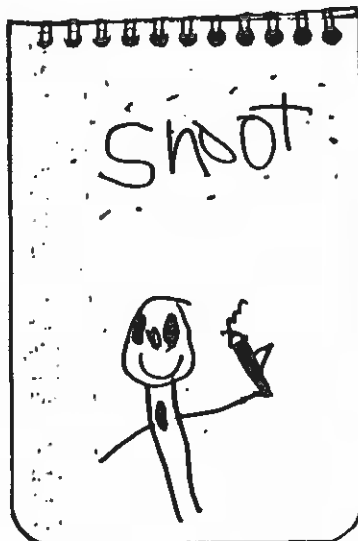
About 6:30 a.m. one Monday in May, Dooney was awakened by the snores of a woman he had never seen before.

He had spent another night on the couch in his Landover living room surrounded by drug addicts and indigents because his mother had allowed her friends to lock him out of his bedroom.

"Mommy, wake up," Dooney called while pounding on his mother's bedroom door. He needed help to reach clothes left hanging overnight to dry over stove burners. As he foraged later for his homework, two Prince George's County police officers pushed the door open and flashed an arrest warrant for the 19-year-old man sleeping in Dooney's bed. The child cowered on the floor, sucking his thumb, while the man was led out in handcuffs. Then he ran out behind them to head for the school bus.

"Ain't this a terrible day," Dooney said before slamming the door.

Dooney's mother moved to Washington Heights in 1977, a time when the complex advertised "luxury apartments." During Dooney's preschool years, Waters said, the complex was "a nice, clean place full of working class folks." Even then, marijuana,



Asked why he fears police, Dooney drew this sketch; the circle in his mother, he said, is a bullet hole.

"We had two incomes, two kids, all the things that you dream about in a marriage," Waters said. "There was always food in the refrigerator and money in the bank. We did drugs then, but only at night and on weekends."

Dooney's parents were introduced to crack shortly after their separation, and their drug use became less recreational. Dooney's father said he became a small-time drug dealer to support his crack habit and spent six months in jail in 1988 for selling drugs. Dooney's mother said she has traded away most of the family's belongings—and all of her sons' toys—to buy drugs.

Waters, who has no criminal record, said she lost her job with the Armed Forces Benefit and Relief Association in the District early last year, a few months after she was hired, because she kept falling asleep on the job after smoking crack all night. With an abundance of time and a circle of drug-addicted neighbors, Waters's occasional crack use became an insatiable ache. She said she began selling crack to support her mounting habit by buying one large rock, smoking some and selling the rest at a profit. By her account, the addiction quickly outgrew her drug dealing income and she began to let people smoke or sell drugs in her apartment on the condition that they shared their bounty with her.

At that point, Dooney's apartment became a crack house. "All

speed, powder cocaine and other drugs circulated through the community.

But the introduction of crack swept in a new era. Nothing before it had spawned so rapid and so wrenching an addiction.

Not all Washington Heights residents are involved in the drug trade. Many families take pains to shield themselves and their children from drugs and violence. But the vast numbers that started using crack tell similar tales about addictions that rapidly exceeded their incomes.

Three years ago, Dooney's father worked as an electrician's apprentice. His mother was a typist for the Prince George's County Board of Education and took night courses in interior design at Prince George's County Community College.

of a sudden, they just set up shop," his mother said. "I told people never to keep more than \$100 worth in my house. Smoking is one thing but for the police to walk up in your house and have people selling, that's two charges."

The children's lives declined in step with their parents. Dooney's teachers at Greenbelt Center Elementary School said he has had increasing emotional and academic problems since he entered kindergarten almost two years ago.

His 13-year-old half brother dropped out of the seventh grade last fall and has been arrested six times in two years on charges ranging from jumping trains to stealing cars.

Both of Waters's sons have begged her to seek help and she maintained that she wanted to kick her addiction. She said she wanted to move away from Washington Heights to a place where "people leave your house when you tell them to." But Waters won't enter a treatment program, even though she has been referred by social workers. "I'm doing rehabilitation on my own self," she said.

In the last three years, addiction has whittled her body from a size 16 to a size 5. Her eyes were sunken, underlined by tufts of purplish skin. Her complexion, which she said was once "the envy" of her three sisters, was lifeless, almost like vinyl. Waters did not own a comb during the period that The Washington Post visited her home. When she wanted to fix her hair, she borrowed one from a neighbor.

Pictures in a blue photo album she kept in her living room show a more attractive Addie L. Waters—a buxom woman with radiant eyes, bright red lipstick and a voluminous hairdo. Dooney paged through the photo album on a Sunday afternoon and said, "My mother used to be pretty."

Dooney comes from a family with a legacy of addiction. His mother said she bought her first bag of drugs, a \$5 sack of marijuana, from her alcoholic father in the late '70s. Now she said she buys crack occasionally from her 13-year-old son.

Dooney's father said he started smoking marijuana in high school and moved on to using PCP, speed and powder cocaine. Dooney's parents both described themselves as "recreational drug users" when they were married on May 28, 1981.

He smoked his first hit of crack about two years ago, Dooney's father said, when a girlfriend encouraged him to try the drug. Dooney's mother also tried crack for the first time with a lover, a boyfriend who said it "was the best high around."

When she first started smoking crack, Waters said, she would lock herself in the bathroom to hide from her two sons. The charade didn't last long. One evening Russell threw open the bathroom door and discovered his mother with a plastic pipe in her mouth.

"I tried to hide it and he saw me," said Waters, who went on to describe how Russell, then in the fifth grade, slapped her several times and flushed the drugs down the toilet. "By him seeing me, it really affected me," Waters said. "I left it alone for about an hour."

Eventually, she said, Russell's reactions became less extreme, and he got involved with the drug trade himself by selling soap chips on the street to unsuspecting buyers.

"I kept trying to figure out where my soap was going and I found them breaking it up, putting it in these little pink bags. I guess you could say it was my fault," said Waters, who said that Russell even-

tually started selling real crack. Russell leads a nomadic life and could not be questioned about his mother's statements.

In early interviews, Waters called herself a good parent, a claim her two sons disputed. By Waters's admission, she rarely woke up with Dooney when he got ready for school and only occasionally cooked meals for him. During the two months a reporter and photographer visited the apartment, Waters never checked Dooney's homework after school and in interviews couldn't remember his kindergarten or first-grade teachers' names.

Over time, Waters backed away from her earlier descriptions of herself. "I can't be the kind of mother I should be when I'm smoking crack," she said. "If I could do it all over again I would not do drugs."

Waters will take the blame for Russell, but she maintains that it would not be her fault if Dooney started using or selling drugs.

"If he does, it won't be because of me," Waters said. "I learned with Russell so I tell [Dooney] not to smoke or sell drugs. It's my fault that I'm doing it but I think [Dooney] knows better. I tell him all the time that he don't want to live like me."

Waters said that Dooney had seen her smoke crack "hundreds" of times. "He would always tell me, 'Mommy, say no to drugs' and I would say 'Okay, baby.'" She eventually stopped trying to hide her crack habit from Dooney and began smoking crack in front of him the way many parents nurture strong cigarette habits.

Dooney said he hates drugs and what they have done to his life. Yet he seems to view the drug trade as an inevitable calling in the way that some children look at the steel mills and coal mines in which their forebears have worked. They may not like the idea of working in the factory or mine, but for many, it is the most reliable and accessible source of income. In Dooney's neighborhood, the industry is drugs.

Asked if he will sell or use drugs when he grows up, Dooney shook his head violently and wrinkled his nose in disgust. But the expression faded, and Dooney looked at the floor: "I don't want to sell drugs, but I will probably have to."

NEXT: The institutional challenge

The Washington Post

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*Met

School Was Only Haven Of Hope

Last of two articles

By Michele L. Norris
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Dooney Waters could list the steps for cooking crack cocaine before he could tie his shoelaces.

"You . . . cook it on the stove," 6-year-old Dooney, a first-grader at Greenbelt Center Elementary School, said last spring. "It's done when it gets hard. Then you break it into little pieces and you smoke it from a pipe. I seen it a thousand times."

Perhaps that's why Dooney sometimes scoffed at school programs designed to teach pupils to "just say no" to drugs.

"The Drug Avengers ain't real," he said,

referring to an educational cartoon in which a band of super heroes prevents children from buying and using drugs. "They couldn't stop my mother from doing drugs," said Dooney, whose mother said that she had been addicted to crack for almost three years.

Dooney's response to such programs underscores the challenges that schools face in trying to preach the evils of drugs to a growing pool of children who live within the core of the expanding drug trade.

"You have to ask yourself, 'What am I telling a child when I say to him that drugs are bad and yet everyone he knows is using drugs regularly?'" said John Van Schoonhoven, principal of Greenbelt Center in Prince George's County. "It worries me that perhaps

we aren't reaching these children and teaching them that they don't have to get involved with drugs, even though almost everyone they know already has."

Dooney was one of about 250 children bused to Greenbelt Center from the Washington Heights apartment complex in Landover, a maze of federally subsidized units that police said hosts one of Prince George's County's largest drug markets. He lived in the hub of his neighborhood's drug traffic, an apartment that county police said is one of the busiest drug centers in Washington Heights.

In his first-grade room was a group of pupils that teachers called the "casualty class."

Among the 17 children was one whose

See VICTIM, A10, Col. 1

VICTIM, From A1

Mother died of a drug overdose while he was in kindergarten and another whose mother was sent to a county detoxification program last winter after an arrest on drug-related charges. A 6-year-old boy lived with an aunt because his mother was a cocaine prostitute who disappeared for months at a time. "My mom won't get up; she too high," the pupil blurted out in class one day while the teacher took attendance.

Another pupil reported to the nurses' office before lunch every day for his midday dose of a tranquilizer that calmed hyperactivity and jitters common to children born addicted to heroin. Another preish 6-year-old went through cocaine withdrawal after he was born. He and two sisters slept in an abandoned car outside his apartment building for several weeks last winter because his apartment was a crack house that was the site of gun battles and police raids.

And then there was Dooney, who was adopted as a mascot of sorts by the school.

His mother, Addie Lorraine Waters, said in extended interviews with The Washington Post that she allowed drug dealers to start selling from her two-bedroom apartment about two years ago on the condition that they provide her with a steady supply of drugs. Her occasional drug use sunk into a debilitating addiction, and Dooney fell along with her.

Fearing for his son, Dooney's father took him to stay in the District in late May. The father, who did not want to be identified, is a recovering drug addict and convicted drug dealer who has been separated from Waters for more than three years. A federal government employee, the father said he takes Dooney to Narcotics Anonymous meetings every week to help Dooney recover from his experiences.

Waters, who did not resist her son's move, said it was better that he left her apartment. Shortly after Dooney moved, he said, "I'm glad I don't live in that place no more."

While living with his mother, Dooney frequently witnessed assaults in which people were beaten or burned. He has his own collection of scars, cuts and bruises. Waters said that dealers often sold drugs out of Dooney's bedroom, even while he was sleeping, and sometimes took over his bed to trade sex for drugs. Dooney described in great detail how addicts regularly smoked crack in his presence, sometimes exhaling the pungent smoke in his face.

"People be doing drugs at my house all the time," Dooney blurted out in class one day during a school program about drug use. "Drugs are why my mother don't take care of me."

Dooney's mother agrees to a point. "I know I ain't the best parent in the world," Waters said. "I'm trying to quit but it ain't all that easy."

To help Dooney and others like him, teachers are being called on increasingly to attend to physical and emotional needs that are ignored in the pupils' homes. For children who live with drug-addicted parents, school is often a place of refuge.

"You do more parenting than teaching nowadays," said Wendy Geagan, an instructional aide who tutors children with learning problems at Greenbelt Center. "It's all so different now. We have always had to help children with their problems, but these kids want to be held. They want to be mothered. They need affection. They need their emotions soothed."

Isabel Field, Dooney's first-grade teacher, started each school day with hugs for her students. But Field and other employees paid par-

ticular attention to Dooney's needs. Field supplied much of Dooney's wardrobe, sent food home in his book bag each night, and arranged for families in Dooney's neighborhood to cook him hot meals during the winter months. Field also devised a plan for Dooney to receive extra food through the school's free lunch program. Denied regular meals in his home, Dooney often gobbled down two meals at lunchtime and sometimes scrounged around for leftover items on other pupils' trays.

Joe Squarells, a custodian at Greenbelt Center, visited Dooney's apartment on weekends and sometimes took him along on family outings. Teacher Marcia Donahoe Marino bought Dooney a bag of athletic socks and a pair of high-top tennis shoes in late May. His old sneakers, the same ones that he had when he started kindergarten in 1987, were so small that his toes had begun to bruise and blister.

Dooney's teachers at Greenbelt Center began to suspect that his mother had a drug problem shortly after he entered kindergarten when he became increasingly unkempt.

"It was rather sudden," said Janet Pelkey, Dooney's kindergarten teacher. "He wasn't bathed. He became very angry and started striking out. He started gobbling down food whenever he got it, even candy and snacks in the classroom. It was obvious that something was going on at home."

School officials said they could not reach Dooney's mother by phone and no one answered the door during several home visits. The school-community link was difficult to maintain for many pupils from Washington Heights because they were bused to the school for desegregation purposes. Many families in Washington Heights did not own cars, making it difficult to visit a school four Capital Beltway exits and three bus transfers from Landover. Conversely, teachers said they were afraid to visit Washington Heights, particularly during the winter, when daylight is scarce. So teachers had little or no contact with the parents of pupils who had the most turbulent home lives.

Concerned about his emotional problems, Dooney's kindergarten teacher placed him in the "transitional first grade," a class for students with academic problems that set them a few steps behind other children their age.

Dooney's condition worsened when he entered first grade in September, teachers said. He was given to fits of screaming and crying and came to school wearing torn and filthy clothes, they said. "It was almost like he was shellshocked when he came to school in the fall," Field said. "He is such a sad little boy. He walks around with his head down and he's al-

About the Series

A reporter and a photographer from The Washington Post spent more than two months in the spring chronicling the life of Dooney Waters, a 6-year-old growing up in a Washington Heights apartment complex that Prince George's County police have identified as one of the most active drug markets in Landover.

Dooney's mother, Addie Lorraine Waters, agreed to open her home to The Post in hopes that the attention would help her break away from drug dealers who were using the apartment to sell cocaine, heroin, PCP and other drugs.

The reporter and photographer observed Dooney's home life and school routine, and conducted more than 80 interviews with friends, relatives, teachers, police and social service workers to see how drugs and related violence affect one child.

Dooney is the nickname that the child's family and friends use for him. Waters is his legal surname.

ways sucking his little thumb.

"When I discovered what he was going through at home, I thought, 'My goodness, it's amazing that he even gets to school,'" Field said.

His mood swung like a pendulum. "Sometimes he comes in and he is just starving for affection," said Susan Bennett, an instructional assistant. "He clings to his teacher like he is afraid to let go . . . Or sometimes when he comes to school he is angry. You brush by him and he is ready to attack."

Dooney entered first grade lacking several basic skills children normally master before leaving kindergarten. Teachers said he had a difficult time distinguishing among colors and could not count past 10. But Dooney's academic skills improved in classes that provided special equipment and individual tutoring. By the end of the year, his test scores put him in line with others his age, though he still had trouble with rudimentary tasks such as tying his shoes and telling time.

One day in April, Dooney sat off to the side of his classroom with his head on his desk and his thumb in his mouth while other students recited vocabulary words. He was dozing, he explained later, because he spent the previous night pretending to sleep while adults sat on his bed smoking crack. "I pulled the covers over my head so no one would know I wasn't sleep," Dooney said later in the day. "I hate when they do that."

Acting on the advice of teachers, the Prince George's County Department of Child Protective Services investigated Dooney's mother.

"Based on the provided investigative information, the allegations of neglect have been indicated," child protective services worker Conchita A. Woods wrote in a letter to Waters dated April 24, 1989, a year after the investigation began. But a caseworker said in an interview that it would be "months, maybe even years" before they could seek to remove Dooney from his mother's custody.

In an interview, Waters disputed the results of the social service investigation.

"I been thinking, those people have nerve telling me that I am unfit," she said. "They ain't been up here enough to know what kind of parent I am. They have no business saying I neglect my kids."

Russell Brown, the investigator, said he had about 20 cases on his desk just like Waters's.

"We have a lot of cases that are much worse than that," Brown said. "There's probably not a

See VICTIM, A11, Col. 4

VICTIM, From A10

whole lot I can do" for Dooney. Brown said that he does not have time to go through the arduous process of taking a child from a parent unless there is imminent danger.

"It's up to you guys to help this little boy because we just don't have the manpower to do it," Brown told Dooney's teachers over lunch on April 27.

Field began telling Dooney to hide the goodies she sent home with him after he said that his mother and other adults were eating the food. "I don't usually teach children this, but this is a matter of survival," Field said.

After that, Dooney stashed the food from his book bag as soon as he got home. One evening his mother asked for one of the chocolate chip cookies provided by a guidance counselor.

"My teacher told me not to share these with anyone," he replied. After prodding, Dooney offered to sell two cookies for a quarter. He sold her one cookie for a dime and sat down to devour the rest of the package.

Several other pupils at Greenbelt Center showed emotional problems like Dooney's, teachers and counselors said.

"Conflicts between warring drug factions and the use and trafficking in crack and other drugs has made living in this neighborhood a physical and psychological nightmare for children," principal Van Schoonhoven wrote in a memo to school officials asking for more resources.

"The sounds and results of gun shots are a frequent accompaniment to the daily lives of Washington Heights residents. Children have indicated that guns have frequently been held to their heads and clicked as a form of entertainment by drug dealers who hang out around the apartment entrances," Van Schoonhoven wrote.

At the principal's urging, Prince George's school and government officials created a pilot after-school program that offers tutoring, counseling and drug education for students at Greenbelt Center. Equally important, it shields them from neighborhood violence for a few extra hours. Although its primary function is to help children with drug-related trauma, the program also provides academic enrichment and free day care for other students. From 3 to 6:30 p.m., children get help with homework, counseling, playtime and a snack—the last meal of the day for many of them.

School officials around the country say such programs may be the vanguard of school reform as more children enter schools with a crush of physical and emotional problems that

detract from standard academic work.

"It's become apparent that schools cannot do all that they are supposed to be doing in a six-hour day," said Nancy Kochuk, a spokeswoman for the National Education Association, the largest teachers' union. "The schools are basically set up as an industrial model. It's like a factory line. That doesn't seem to serve our society very well any more when we are dealing with children with such intense and overwhelming problems."

Those problems surface even in the games of Dooney and his buddies.

One spring day, Dooney and six of his friends were preparing to play "cops and robbers." But their version had a twist: The criminals were drug dealers, not thieves.

"I want to be the dealer. You always get to be the dealer," one of the children said.

"I'm gonna be a dealer 'cause I already got my stuff," said another child, who opened his palm to reveal a handful of little white stones he had picked up from the playground.

All except Dooney and best friend Jay Hooks were allowed to play drug dealers. Jay, a shy child who rarely speaks, was assigned the cop's role. Dooney had to be the addict.

Playing out the role with conviction, Dooney stumbled around from one "dealer" to the next, pawing at their clothing and begging for drugs. "Come on, give me a rock," Dooney said. "Please, pretty please. I need a rock." His head rolled back and forth and he dragged his feet in the dust in an eerily accurate performance mimicking real addicts nearby.

Eventually a child named Dwayne gave Dooney a pebble. Dooney pretended to smoke the stone from his fist, then fell backward into the dirt in feigned ecstasy.

The children erupted in syncopated laughter. Dwayne held his belly and said to Dooney: "You look just like your mom."

Other children at Dooney's school knew that he lived in a crack house. Some were not allowed to visit his apartment. Others teased him by calling his mother "Crack Addie." Older children taunted Dooney with a new version of an old children's rhyme: "I saw Addie sitting in a tree, smoking a P-I-P-E."

Dooney staunchly defended his mother in front of his peers, sometimes attacking the pupils who called his mother names. "At least I know who my daddy is," Dooney sassed back.

But in private, particularly in conversations with his teachers and counselors, Dooney would bemoan his mother's drug use. "I hate drugs. I hate people who do drugs. I hate where I live," Dooney said.

When the class was discussing the pending summer vacation, Dooney asked teachers: "What's going to happen to me this summer? Who is going to give me food? I don't want school to end."

Dooney's teachers said a bittersweet good-bye in June. Dooney's appearance and attitude showed marked improvement after he left his mother's apartment—so much that one of his best friends, after seeing him from the rear, asked another pupil about "the new kid."

But teachers wondered aloud whether Dooney would continue to get attention and support at a new school now that he has moved. "I'm so happy that he's doing better," Field said. "The change is really remarkable But I worry that he will get lost in another setting where teachers don't know about the conditions that child has survived."

One evening in May, Dooney sat in his Land-over apartment singing the theme song from the educational cartoon "Drug Avengers" while he played with an 8-week-old boy who suffered jitters and periods of disconsolate shrieking that were symptoms of his withdrawal from crack. The baby, whose mother is a frequent visitor in Dooney's apartment, was born four weeks premature and weighed 4 pounds, 13 ounces at birth, the mother said.

Dooney and the baby represent the present and the future challenges for public schools that must find a way to educate children who are environmentally or physically disadvantaged by their parents' drug use.

"I am still operating on the assumption that all kids come to school with the same potential," Van Schoonhoven said. "I want to believe this is true, but all this makes me question whether we shouldn't be trying to find new ways to teach children who are so traumatized . . . that they can't focus on learning."

"Sometimes I can't sleep at night. I lie awake and think about the future and how we are going to be overwhelmed by all these students and their problems. I think about little [Dooney] and my heart goes out to him. And then I realize that he is just the tip of iceberg."

Drug Wars Leave Emotional Scars

School officials, psychologists and social service workers say they cannot keep pace with the increasing demand for their services by a growing pool of children who, like 6-year-old Dooney Waters, grow up in crack houses, the marrow of the area's violent drug trade.

Raymond Lorian, a professor of psychology at the University of Maryland, said that the Washington area and society in general are at a crisis stage with so many children growing up in areas that resemble combat zones.

"These are children who are being raised under incredible conditions of abuse and neglect," Lorian said, "and right now it appears that society is not ready to deal with their problems."

A review of Prince George's County's social service, health department and public school records indicates that thousands of children are being reared by adults whose appetite for drugs has dulled their parental responsibilities. Often, these children attend schools that are ill-equipped to help students who have been battered by years of blight and neglect and live in neighborhoods where scores are settled quickly and violently.

Psychologists say children such as Dooney who are repeatedly exposed to drugs and violence often show symptoms that are similar to post-traumatic stress syndrome, a psychological disorder common in adults who have experienced war. The symptoms can include introverted behavior, phobias, nightmares, violent outbursts, diminished expectations for the future, hyperactivity or extreme listlessness, and an inability to trust others or form close

relationships, said Brian Doyle, a psychiatrist at Georgetown University Hospital.

"These are kids who are in danger of having severe psychological disorders," Doyle said. "We know something about how to take care of acute post-traumatic stress disorder, but it's something we do after the victim is removed from the stress-producing environment. The problem here is that we are looking for ways to treat children who are totally immersed in a stressful and really quite dangerous environment."

— Michele L. Norris

MIETRO

Dooney's Mother Is Enrolled in Drug Program

By Michele L. Norris
Washington Post Staff Writer

After more than three years of trying to kick her crack habit by herself, Addie L. Waters checked into a drug treatment program to let experts try where she had failed, she said yesterday.

"I realized that I had a problem and I needed help," Waters, 32, said during a telephone interview from a private drug treatment facility about 50 miles from Washington. "I couldn't do it by myself," she said.

Waters, who is halfway through the 28-day program, and her 6-year-old son, Dooney, were the focus of a Washington Post series this week that chronicled the child's experiences growing up in an apartment that police and social service workers had identified as a crack house. Waters, a former Veterans Department employee, said she began letting drug dealers use her Landover apartment more than two years ago as long as they helped support her drug habit.

Forced to resign from her job two years ago, Waters said she traded welfare checks, food stamps and most of the family's belongings to feed her mounting drug habit. "You want it

[crack] so bad that you can't help yourself," she said.

"I had gone about as low as a person could go," said Waters, who was evicted from her apartment in early July and subsequently lost touch with her friends and neighbors. On July 16, her mother checked her into a four-day detoxification program at Prince George's Hospital Center. From there she enrolled in a private drug rehabilitation center, which contracts with the county to provide group and individual counseling.

Waters said she is looking forward to rebuilding her life.

"It's not easy," she said. "It's never easy, especially when you have been addicted as long as I have."

But Waters probably won't be alone in her effort to kick her habit. More than a dozen people have offered to help her, including the director of the drug rehabilitation program at Dominion Hospital, a Falls Church facility offering inpatient and outpatient services. Several dozen people also have offered gifts and financial assistance for Dooney and his father, who has asked not to be identified.

The lives of Waters's two sons declined as her addiction grew. The oldest, 13-year-old Frank

Russell West, said he moved out of his mother's apartment in January. He dropped out of the seventh grade last fall and has been arrested six times in the last two years.

Dooney's teachers at Greenbelt Center Elementary School said he developed emotional and academic problems after his mother opened their apartment to drug dealers. Waters's estranged husband moved Dooney out of the apartment in May.

Told yesterday that his mother had sought help for her addiction, Dooney said, "Good, I'm happy about that."

Waters's estranged husband, a recovering drug addict who attends Narcotics Anonymous meetings three times a week, said: "I'm glad she decided to do something. Those of us who know, know that you can't kick a crack habit on your own."

Waters said she likely will enter a halfway house when she leaves the rehabilitation program Aug. 18. "I know I am going to get myself together—not just for me, but for my boys," she said.

"You know how I looked in the paper," Waters said, referring to photos published in The Post. "I don't look like that no more. I got my hair done. I'm keeping myself up. I'm gaining weight, too much in fact. I tell you. I'm on my way."

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THE WASHINGTON POST

TEXT OF THE ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT BUSH

Good evening. This is the first time since taking the oath of office that I felt an issue was so important, so threatening, that it warranted talking directly with you, the American people. All of us agree that the gravest domestic threat facing our nation today is drugs.

Drugs have strained our faith in our system of justice. Our courts, our prisons, our legal system are stretched to the breaking point. The social costs of drugs are mounting. In short, drugs are sapping our strength as a nation.

Turn on the evening news, or pick up the morning paper, and you'll see what some Americans know just by stepping out their front door: Our most serious problem today is cocaine, and in particular, crack.

Who's responsible? Let me tell you straight out.

Everyone who uses drugs.

Everyone who sells drugs.

And everyone who looks the other way.

Tonight, I will tell you how many Americans are using illegal drugs. I will present to you our national strategy to deal with every aspect of this threat. And I will ask you to get involved in what promises to be a very difficult fight.

This, this [package] is crack cocaine seized a few days ago by Drug Enforcement Administration agents in a park just across the street from the White House. It could easily have been heroin or PCP. It's as innocent looking as candy, but it is turning our cities into battle zones, and it is murdering our children. Let there be no mistake: This stuff is poison.

Some used to call drugs harmless recreation. They're not. Drugs are a real and terribly dangerous threat to our neighborhoods, our friends and our families.

No one among us is out of harm's way. When 4-year-olds play in playgrounds strewn with discarded hypodermic needles and crack vials, it breaks my heart. When cocaine—one of the most deadly and addictive illegal drugs—is available to school kids—school kids—it's an outrage. And when hundreds of thousands of babies are born each year to mothers who use drugs—premature babies born desperately sick—then even the most defenseless among us are at risk.

Trends In Drug Use

These are the tragedies behind the statistics. But the numbers also have quite a story to tell. Let me share with you the results of the recently completed household survey of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. It compares recent drug use to three years ago. It tells us some good news and some very bad news. First, the good.

As you can see in the chart, in 1985, the government estimated that 23 million Americans were using drugs on a "current" basis—that is, at least once in the preceding month. Last year, that number fell by more than a third. That means almost 9 million fewer Americans are casual drug users. Good news.

Because we changed our national attitude toward drugs, casual drug use has declined. We have many to thank: our brave law-enforcement officers, religious leaders, teachers, community activists and leaders of business and labor. We should also thank the media for their exhaustive news and editorial coverage and for their air time and space for anti-drug messages. And finally, I want to thank President and Mrs. Reagan for their leadership. All of these good people told the truth—that drug use is wrong and dangerous.

But, as much comfort as we can draw from these dramatic reductions, there is also bad news, very bad news. Roughly 8 million people have used cocaine in the past year. Almost 1 million of them used it frequently—once a week or more.

What this means is that, in spite of the fact that overall cocaine use is down, frequent use has almost doubled in the last few years. And that's why habitual cocaine users, especially crack users, are the most pressing, immediate drug problem.

More Than a Federal Strategy

What, then, is our plan?

To begin with, I trust the lesson of experience: No single policy will cut it, no matter how glamorous or magical it may sound. To win the war against addictive drugs like crack will take more than just a federal strategy. It will take a national strategy, one that reaches into every school, every workplace, involving every family.

Earlier today, I sent this document, our first such national strategy, to the Congress. It was developed with the hard work of our nation's first drug policy director, Bill Bennett. In preparing this plan, we talked

with state, local and community leaders, law enforcement officials and experts in education, drug prevention and rehabilitation. We talked with parents and kids. We took a long, hard look at all that the federal government has done about drugs in the past: what's worked and, let's be honest, what hasn't. Too often, people in government acted as if their part of the problem—whether fighting drug production, or drug smuggling, or drug demand—was the only problem. But turf battles won't win this war. Teamwork will.

Tonight, I'm announcing a strategy that reflects the coordinated, cooperative commitment of all our federal agencies. In short, this plan is as comprehensive as the problem. With this strategy, we now finally have a plan

that coordinates our resources, our programs and the people who run them.

Our weapons in this strategy are the law and criminal justice system, our foreign policy, our treatment systems, and our schools and drug-prevention programs. So the basic weapons we need are the ones we already have. What has been lacking is a strategy to effectively use them.

Let me address four of the major elements of our strategy.

First, we are determined to enforce the law, to make our streets and neighborhoods safe. So to start, I'm proposing that we more than double federal assistance to state and local law enforcement. Americans have a right to safety in and around their homes.

And we won't have safe neighborhoods unless we are tough on drug criminals—much tougher than we are now. Sometimes that means tougher penalties. But more often it just means punishment that is swift and certain. We've all heard stories about drug dealers who are caught and arrested again and again but never punished. Well, here the rules have changed: If you sell drugs, you will be caught. And when you're caught, you will be prosecuted. And once you're convicted, you will do time. Caught. Prosecuted. Punished.

Larger Criminal Justice System

I am also proposing that we enlarge our criminal justice system across the board at the local, state and federal levels alike. We need more prisons, more jails, more courts, more prosecutors. So tonight, I'm requesting—altogether—an almost billion-and-a-half-dollar increase in drug-related federal spending on law enforcement.

And while illegal drug use is found in every community, nowhere is it worse than in our public housing projects. You know, the poor have never had it easy in this world. But in the past, they weren't mugged on the way home from work by crack gangs. And their children didn't have to dodge bullets on the way to school. And that is why I'm targeting \$50 million to fight crime in public housing projects—to help restore order, and to kick out the dealers for good.

The second element of our strategy looks beyond our borders, where the cocaine and crack, bought on America's streets, is grown and processed. In Colombia alone, cocaine killers have gunned down a leading statesman, murdered almost 200 judges and seven members of their Supreme Court. The besieged governments of the drug-producing countries are fighting back, fighting to break the international drug rings. But you and I agree with the courageous president of Colombia, Virgilio Barco, who said that if Americans use cocaine, then Americans are paying for murder. American cocaine users need to understand that our nation has zero tolerance for casual drug use. We have a responsibility not to leave our brave friends in Colombia to fight alone.

The \$65 million emergency assistance announced two weeks ago was just our first step in assisting the Andean nations in their fight against the cocaine cartels. Colombia has already arrested suppliers, seized tons of cocaine and confiscated palatial homes of drug lords. But Colombia faces a long, uphill battle, so we must be ready to do more.

Our strategy allocates more than a quarter of a billion dollars for next year in military and law enforcement assistance for the three Andean nations of Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. This will be the first part of a five-year, \$2 billion program to counter the producers, the traffickers and the smugglers.

I spoke with President Barco just last week, and we hope to meet with the leaders of affected countries in an unprecedented drug summit, all to coordinate an inter-American strategy against the cartels. We will work with our allies and friends—especially our economic summit partners—to do more in the fight against drugs. I'm also asking the Senate to ratify the United Nations anti-drug convention concluded last December.

To stop those drugs on the way to America, I propose that we spend more than a billion-and-a-half dollars on interdiction. Greater interagency cooperation, combined with sophisticated intelligence-gathering and Defense Department technology, can help stop drugs at our borders.

Our message to the drug cartels is this: The rules have changed. We will help any government that wants our help. When requested, we will for the first time make available the appropriate resources of America's

armed forces. We will intensify our efforts against drug smugglers on the high seas, in international airspace and at our borders. We will stop the flow of chemicals from the United States used to process drugs. We will pursue and enforce international agreements to track drug money to the front men and financiers. And then we will handcuff these money launderers, and jail them—just like any street dealer. And for the drug kingpins, the death penalty.

The third part of our strategy concerns drug treatment. Experts believe that there are 2 million American drug users who may be able to get off drugs with proper treatment. But right now, only 40 percent of them are actually getting help. This is simply not good enough.

Many people who need treatment won't seek it on their own. And some who do seek it are put on a waiting list. Most programs were set up to deal with heroin addicts, but today, the major problem is cocaine users. It's time we expand our treatment systems and do a better job of providing services to those who need them.

And so tonight, I'm proposing an increase of \$321 million in federal spending on drug treatment.

With this strategy, we will do more. We will work with the states. We will encourage employers to establish employee assistance programs to cope with drug use. And, because addiction is such a cruel inheritance, we will intensify our search for ways to help expectant mothers who use drugs.

Expansion of Prevention Programs

Fourth, we must stop illegal drug use before it starts. Unfortunately, it begins early—for many kids, before their teens. But it doesn't start the way you might think, from a dealer or an addict hanging around the school playground. More often, our kids first get their drugs free, from friends, or even from older brothers or sisters. Peer pressure spreads drug use. Peer pressure can help stop it.

I am proposing a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar increase in federal funds for school and community prevention programs that help young people and adults reject enticements to try drugs. And I'm proposing something else. Every school, college and university—and every workplace—must adopt tough but fair policies about drug use by students and employees. And those that will not adopt such policies will not get federal funds. Period.

The private sector also has an important role to play. I spoke with a businessman named Jim Burke who said he was haunted by the thought—a nightmare, really—that somewhere in America, at any given moment, there is a teenage girl who should be in school, instead of giving birth to a child addicted to cocaine. So Jim did something. He led an anti-drug partnership, financed by

private funds, to work with advertisers and media firms. Their partnership is now determined to work with our strategy by generating educational messages worth a million dollars a day every day for the next three years—a billion dollars worth of advertising, all to promote the anti-drug message.

As president, one of my first missions is to keep the national focus on our offensive against drugs. So next week I will take the anti-drug message to the classrooms of America in a special television address, one that I hope will reach every school, every young American. But drug education doesn't begin in class or on TV. It must begin at home and in the neighborhood. Parents and families must set the first example of a drug-free life. And when families are broken, caring friends and neighbors must step in.

These are the most important elements in our strategy to fight drugs. They are all designed to reinforce one another, to mesh into a powerful whole. To mount an aggressive attack on the problem from every angle. This is the first time in the history of our country that we truly have a comprehensive strategy.

As you can tell, such an approach will not come cheaply. Last February, I asked for a \$700 million increase in the drug budget for the coming year. And now over the past six months of careful study, we have found an immediate need for another \$1.5 billion. With this added 2.2 billion, our 1990 budget totals almost \$8 billion—the largest increase in history.

We need this program fully implemented—right away. The next fiscal year begins just 26 days from now. So tonight I'm asking the Congress—which has helped us formulate this strategy—to help us move it forward immediately.

We can pay for this fight against drugs without raising taxes or adding to the budget deficit. We have submitted our plan to Congress that shows just how to fund it within the limits of our bipartisan budget agreement.

Now I know some will still say that we are not spending enough money. But those who judge our strategy only by its price tag simply don't understand the problem. Let's face it, we've all seen in the past that money alone won't solve our toughest problems.

Unified Effort Needed

To be strong and efficient, our strategy needs these funds. But there is no match for a united America, a determined America, an angry America. Our outrage against drugs unites us, brings us together behind this one plan of action, an assault on every front.

This is the toughest domestic challenge we've faced in decades. And it's a challenge we must face—not as Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives—but as

Americans. The key is a coordinated, united effort. We have responded faithfully to the request of the Congress to produce our nation's first national drug strategy. I'll be looking to the Democratic majority and our Republicans in Congress for leadership and bipartisan support. And our citizens deserve cooperation, not competition—a national effort, not a partisan bidding war.

To start, Congress needs not only to act on this national drug strategy, but also to act on our crime package announced last May: a package to toughen sentences, beef up law enforcement and build new prison space for 24,000 inmates.

You and I both know the federal government can't do it alone. The states need to match tougher federal laws with tougher laws of their own—stiffer bail, probation, parole and sentencing.

And we need your help. If people you know are users, help them, help them get off drugs. If you are a parent, talk to your children about drugs—tonight.

Call your local drug prevention program. Be a big brother or sister to a child in need. Pitch in with your local Neighborhood Watch program. Whether you give your time or talent, everyone counts:

Every employer who bans drugs from the workplace.

Every school that's tough on drug use.

Every neighborhood in which drugs are not welcome.

And most important, every one of you who refuses to look the other way. Every one of you counts.

Of course, victory will take hard work and time. But together we will win—too many young lives are at stake.

Not long ago, I read a newspaper story about a little boy named Dooney, who until recently lived in a crack house in a suburb of Washington, D.C. In Dooney's neighborhood, children don't hear the sound of gunfire. And when they play, they pretend to sell to each other small white rocks that they call crack.

Life at home was so cruel that Dooney begged his teachers to let him sleep on the floor at school. And when asked about his future, 6-year-old Dooney answers, "I don't want to sell drugs, but I'll probably have to."

Well, Dooney does not have to sell drugs. No child in America should have to live like this. Together, as a people, we can save these kids. We have already transformed a national attitude of tolerance into one of condemnation. But the war on drugs will be hard-won, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block, child by child.

If we fight this war as a divided nation, then the war is lost. But if we face this evil as a nation united, this [package] will be nothing but a handful of useless chemicals.

Victory—victory over drugs is our cause, a just cause—and with your help, we are going to win.

Thank you, God bless you and good night.

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A Sudden Spotlight On Second-Grader

Boy Basks in Speech Afterglow

By Michele L. Norris
Washington Post Staff Writer

By noon yesterday, it seemed, everyone in America knew that President Bush's televised anti-drug speech included a poignant mention of Dooney Waters, the 7-year-old suburban Washington child who grew up in a crack house with his drug-addicted mother.

Everyone but Dooney.

The second-grader went halfway through the school day before learning that Bush had used an emotional anecdote about him. Dooney was the subject of a Washington Post series this summer chronicling his experiences while living in a drug-ridden Prince George's County neighborhood.

"I didn't see it," Dooney said of Bush's speech from the Oval Office. "I was in bed at 9 o'clock."

Dooney seemed unclear at first about the president's role. "Is he like Dr. Van?" the second-grader asked, referring to John Van Schoonhoven, principal at Greenbelt Center Elementary School.

When it was explained that the president is the leader of the nation, Dooney raised his eyebrows and

See DOONEY, A28, Col. 1

DOONEY, From A1

said, "Yeah, he's like the principal of the whole world."

Bush mentioned Dooney in closing remarks during his half-hour speech outlining the administration's national anti-drug strategy and pledged that Dooney and other children in similar situations would not have to turn to selling drugs.

"Not long ago, I read a newspaper story about a little boy named Dooney, who, until recently, lived in a crack house in a suburb of Washington, D.C.," Bush said. "In Dooney's neighborhood, children don't flinch at the sound of gunfire. And when they play, they pretend to sell to each other small white rocks they call crack."

"Life at home was so cruel that Dooney begged his teachers to let him sleep on the floor at school. And when asked about his future, 6-year-old Dooney answers: 'I don't want to sell drugs, but I will probably have to.'"

"Well, Dooney does not have to sell drugs. No child in America should have to live like this. Together, as a people we can save these kids."

Dooney, who spent more than two years living in a crack house with his mother, left his Landover apartment in May to move in with his father, who asked to remain anonymous. Dooney spent the summer in the District with his father, a recovering drug addict who often took his son to Narcotics Anonymous meetings to help him recover from his experiences in the crack house. The child moved in with a family friend recently so he could continue attending schools in Prince George's County, his father said.

Dooney's mother, Addie L. Waters, enrolled in a treatment program in July and lives in a halfway house for recovering drug addicts.

While the president's remarks

may have made Dooney a national figure, he was just another pupil in his class of 26 yesterday afternoon.

"The children really have not singled him out," said Carolyn Anderson, Dooney's teacher. "They've accepted him as just another child."

Anderson and other teachers at the school noted the change in Dooney's appearance and attitude when he returned to school this fall. Dooney, who was often denied regular meals while living in the crack house, grew about four inches and gained more than 10 pounds over the summer.

"We can hardly keep him in his clothes," said the family friend, who asked not to be named. "He has jumped from a size 7 to a husky size 10 since the beginning of the summer."

"He's a much happier little fellow," Anderson said. "He smiles and jokes all the time and he wants to do well. He is really trying hard."

Dooney's name stayed in the media spotlight throughout yesterday as William J. Bennett, national drug policy director, mentioned the second-grader in remarks at the National Press Club.

"Think about Dooney and think about somebody saying, 'What that child needs is good drug education,'" Bennett said. "Dooney walks into a drug education class, he knows five times as much as any teacher who has been in a six-week seminar. That child does not need drug education. That child needs protection, that child needs order, and that child needs love."

Officials at Greenbelt Center, which was besieged by phone calls from television and magazine reporters, tried to keep Dooney insulated from media attention.

"I wish people would realize that this child is symbolic of a broader problem," Van Schoonhoven said. "Unfortunately, there are lots of Dooneys in this world."

OUTLOOK

Commentary and Opinion

The Dooney Lessons

He's the Poster Kid, But There Are So Many Others

By Michele L. Norris

WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH closed his nationally televised address last Tuesday with an emotional anecdote about a 6-year-old child growing up in a crack house, he made Dooney Waters the poster child for his administration's war on drugs.

As author of the series of articles in *The Washington Post* last July that chronicled Dooney's experiences in his drug-plagued neighborhood in Prince George's County, I listened to the president's remarks with a strange combination of pride and anxiety.

I was naturally pleased that a newspaper account of one child's life could help people

understand the severity of the drug problem. The president's description of how Dooney would beg teachers to sleep overnight on his classroom floor—rather than go home to his drug-addicted mother—provided the nation with a cute and cuddly victim of drugs on which to focus attention and sympathy. But there's a danger, too, of thrusting this one child into the spotlight, and overlooking the thousands of other kids like him.

"No child in America should have to live like this," the president said. "Together, as a people, we can save these kids."

I hope he's right. But I'm worried that the president—and the nation—may not understand some of the less-obvious lessons of Dooney Waters' life. Here are three conclusions I reached during the two months I

See LESSONS, C2, Col. 1

Michele Norris covers education in Prince George's County for The Washington Post.

The Dooney Lessons

LESSONS, From C1

spent with Dooney at home and in school, and in the days after the stories appeared.

■ *Breaking the cycle.* One of the strongest messages in Dooney's story is that individual intervention can help rescue a child from institutional and parental neglect. Dooney's mother's drug habit obliterated her maternal instinct. Social workers assigned to his case didn't do their job, either. But his teachers at Greenbelt Center Elementary School did, and they may have saved his life.

Dooney's story teaches us that schools have the potential to break the cycle of drug dependency and crime. But even the best-equipped schools and the most well-meaning teachers are forced to practice a form of educational triage—which means singling out the neediest students who can benefit most from help.

Dooney's teachers, in fact, dubbed his class last year "the casualty classroom"—because more than half the students, like Dooney, were traumatized by their parents' chronic drug use. Dooney made it to the top of the critical list, garnering exceptionally large doses of attention and affection from school employees.

But what of the other students? One of them slept in a car for much of last year to stay away from the drug dealers at home. With today's resources, the schools can't provide special attention for every child who needs it.

"There are others in my class that are as bad off as [Dooney]," said Isabel Field, Dooney's first-grade teacher last spring. "But I can't do everything for everyone. I wish I

could help all my students like I try and help [Dooney]."

If intervention makes a difference, so does the lack of it. Officials from the Prince George's County Office of Child Protective Services, acting on the advice of a teacher, initially investigated Dooney's home life and determined that his mother, who described herself as a slave to cocaine, was neglecting him and his 13-year-old half-brother. But there was no follow-through. Social workers, understaffed and overwhelmed by a backlog of cases, never took the decisive step of trying to remove Dooney from his mother's crack den.

■ *Emotions aren't enough.* The publication of Dooney's story brought an emotional outpouring from readers. I received more than 100 calls and letters after Dooney's story appeared from people who said they were moved by his plight. But few of them seemed to understand that there are specific ways to help Dooney and other children like him.

Many readers asked, sometimes in tears, what they could do for Dooney. "How can I help?" queried one Virginia woman in a letter. "Maybe I can't help hundreds of people but maybe, just maybe, I can help one person." Some wrote letters asking The Post to publish a list of agencies and organizations that assist abused and neglected children.

Schools, churches and social-service agencies were a few of the options we suggested to readers. But I wonder how many emotional outpourings were followed by action. A pang in the gut or a trickle of tears can sometimes give us a false sense of accomplishment.

Unfortunately, not all those who called

about Dooney and his family were truly altruistic. Some saw his plight as a way to advance a political career or grab a bit of good publicity. That problem became acute last week. In the days following President Bush's address, hordes of reporters, politicians and business leaders set forth on a predictable search for Dooney. The pack sought the second-grader as if he was the country's sole victim of crack.

An aide from Sen. John Kerry's office, one of several political and business leaders who tried to contact the child, called to ask if Dooney was still living in the Washington Heights Apartment Complex, a community of federally subsidized apartments that hosted one of Prince George's County's largest drug markets.

"You see," the Kerry aide said, "we were wondering, you know, if he was still living in that neighborhood. If we might be able to go in and provide some alternatives for him and his family."

Told that Dooney had since moved out of the apartment complex in Landover to live with a family friend elsewhere in the county, the caller from Kerry's office said: "So you mean he's not there anymore?" He sounded almost disappointed that Dooney had moved out of his old rathole. He might as well have said "Shucks! There went a good photo opportunity for my boss."

When I informed him that there were scores of other children from Dooney's neighborhood who still lived in incredible conditions of blight and neglect, a fact that I am certain he already knew, he thanked me and said he would "look into it." Fat chance.

■ *Denial.* Dooney's story struck a vein of anger in many black readers, who expressed what varied from outrage to disappointment about the story. One caller called the series "a disservice to the black community," saying it

was an example of what the caller saw as the paper's unbalanced coverage of blacks in the Washington area.

"Why is that you [The Washington Post] always show some young man getting arrested instead of showing some of the people out here who are doing positive things," this caller asked. Others said they thought The Post was exaggerating blacks' involvement in the drug trade while virtually ignoring drug abuse in the white community.

"I work in an office where my [white] contemporaries are just as likely to have neighbors who use drugs as I am," said a woman who identified herself as a Brightwood neighborhood resident who works for the District government. "Blacks are not the only people doing drugs out there."

I understood her anger. As a black reporter, I too cringe when I pick up the paper and see another black victim of drugs in the paper. And it's hard for me to deal with the fact that the black middle class is under-represented not just in The Washington Post but in just about every media outlet in America.

But one sad lesson of Dooney's story is that while drugs are not a uniquely black problem in our area, they are certainly a predominantly black problem. To deny that children like Dooney exist is to deny his and thousands of other's pain.

It's difficult to solve a problem unless you admit that it exists. So let's be honest. Yes, there were white students in Dooney's school whose parents used drugs. But their numbers were small, and they were less likely to suffer extreme family and institutional neglect than Dooney and his black classmates. It's a fact that government agencies in impoverished neighborhoods like Dooney's have a harder time meeting the growing demand for their services.

A visit to Dooney's class at Greenbelt Center Elementary School the day after the presidential address shows that the drug problem stretches far beyond one child's story. Dooney, virtually unaware of his new celebrity status, played with a group of students in a round of desks in his second grade classroom wearing a shirt still creased from commercial packaging and a crisp pair of jeans. His appearance was all together different than during the previous school year. Now 7, Dooney had gained 10 pounds and his hair, which was once a tangle of knots and lint, was clipped close to the scalp with a tiny part shaved above the left temple.

But if Dooney's face was a testament to the change in his life, then the appearance of many of his friends from his old neighborhood indicated that they were still enmeshed in conditions of blight. Dooney sat shoulder to shoulder with children who showed up for the first days of school with dirty faces and torn and dusty clothing.

Bush pledged that his federal anti-drug strategy would insure that Dooney, a child who once said "I don't want to sell drugs, but I will probably have to" could escape the magnetic attraction of drug use and dealing.

But it will likely take months—and maybe years—for the money and momentum of the drug war to trickle down to children like Dooney. Even a \$250-million increase in federal funds for school and community prevention programs will do little to help children who live within the marrow of the drug trade unless they are presented with viable routes of escape.

The happiest lesson of Dooney's life is that sometimes, for lucky children, life does get better: It's tough to get Dooney to talk about his old neighborhood these days. He'd rather talk about new toys and new friends.