

## **Prison doesn't help those addicted to drugs**

10/15/03

To the Editor:

A person's station in life affords no immunity to the horrors of drug addiction. Rush Limbaugh, perhaps our nation's most popular radio talk-show host, recently announced that he was addicted to prescription painkillers. He said he would enter a rehabilitation center.

From news reports, it appears that Mr. Limbaugh is addicted to OxyContin, a narcotic that has been widely abused. The only positive thing that can come of this is wider understanding of just how destructive this drug can be. This is not just the old adage — ironically promoted by Limbaugh himself on many occasions — that drugs are "a bad thing." Rather, we need to grasp that once the powerful addiction takes hold, it requires equally powerful methods to effect a treatment.

Treatment is expensive and is not always successful on the first try. Or the tenth. Yet, a positive outcome can impact not only the addict but his or her family as well.

Unfortunately, a treatment option has been ignored in favor of incarceration in far too many cases. There are exceptions; Judge Seth Norman's drug court in Nashville, being an exemplary example of programs that work.

Let us hope that Limbaugh can rid himself of this curse. Let us hope also that when he does, it serves to illustrate the depth of the drug addiction problem in our nation.

Perhaps Mr. Limbaugh can demonstrate that there may be a cure for those who step up and admit their problem.

Our obligation is to have treatments available when they do.

David Raybin