

Six speakers discuss AIDS public policy

By Michelle King

Daily staff writer

Public policy-makers in the Valley are lacking the proper information on AIDS, said Wiggys Sivertsen of SJSU Counseling Services at an AIDS panel Friday.

"People feel that if the public is ignorant, they won't try to experiment," she said.

"We need to educate the policy

makers, so they don't write legislation that ends up hurting the victims," Siversten said.

This AIDS panel discussion on "Public Policy Issues" was held in conjunction with "AIDS Awareness Week" in Morris Dailey Auditorium, and it involved six speakers from the SJSU campus who spoke on their perspective of the problem and also answered anonymous written questions from the 30-member audience.

More questions were asked at this event than at others last week.

"And joking (about AIDS) is a pretty tragic statement," Siversten said. "We need to take an aggressive position and tell them that this isn't something to laugh at."

In an AIDS Awareness student survey given recently by the Student Health Advisory Committee, many students indicated they knew little about AIDS but feared that they could get it easily. The committee chairman, Kevin Keith, cited the survey results.

Twenty percent felt that AIDS victims should be quarantined, 20

percent would refuse to socialize casually with AIDS victims, and 60 percent would never accept transfused blood, Keith said.

"As health educators," said Robert Latta, associate director of SJSU Student Health Services, "we must identify the problem, prioritize, take action, and follow up."

Robert Ingraham, SJSU professor of biological science, feels that people need to be much more aware of the graveness of the disease.

"It's generally considered to be a death warrant," said Ingraham, who had a student two years ago at SJSU who died of AIDS.

Ingraham said that one-fourth of all families will have someone who's gay, so the disease should be understood.

Father Robert Leger of the Campus Christian Ministry stressed that AIDS victims should be treated with as much loving care as Jesus did with all kinds of ill people. "To treat them any different would be inappropriate," he said.

Siversten stressed that only by

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**— Wiggys Siversten,
counselor**

accident do gays make up most of the AIDS victims in the United States because in other places where AIDS exists (such as in Africa), it's equal among heterosexual men and women.

Siversten responded to a question of why gay people are so defensive.

"As a member of the gay community, I've felt the discrimination," Siversten said. "If this disease had happened to the white heterosexual community, believe me, thousands and millions of dollars would have been laid out immediately."

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