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"All the news that fits we print"

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Facts & Figures

Common-Wealth of Data on Campus

Courtesy of The Capitol Campus Relations Office.

Capitol Campus has been designated as the state's official data center under an Executive Order signed by Governor Dick Thornburgh. The Center will be responsible for making accessible to the public and to all state agencies population data and other statistical information that is gathered by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

In establishing the Center at Capitol Campus, Pennsylvania became the 42nd state to set up a data center under the State Data Center Program, which was begun in 1978 by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The idea behind the program, according to Robert W. SurrIDGE, director of the Center at Capitol Campus, is to make accessible the vast amount of data that is collected by the federal census. This data, he said, can be used by researchers, by state and local government agencies, urban and regional planners, businesses and others.

Prior to the establishment of the state data centers, people interested in obtaining census data were generally limited to printed reports produced by the Census Bureau. The reports that they received were extracts that the bureau had compiled from the compre-

hensive census data. "What the user received," SurrIDGE said, "was just a portion of the data that was collected."

Citing the 1970 Census as an example, SurrIDGE noted that at the city block level the Census Bureau tabulated 300 pieces of information. However, the printed census reports listed only 24 pieces of information. "The rest of the information is accessible to the public on computer files, but many people do not know that the information is available," SurrIDGE said. "At the State Data Center, the computer summary tapes and printed reports from the 1960, 1970, and 1980 census will be available."

State government, businesses, local government, researchers and others should benefit directly from the Center, SurrIDGE said. By providing up-to-date and detailed information regarding census and other matters, the Center should lead to improved research, administration, planning and decision making, he noted.

In addition to the well-known Census of Population and Housing, the Center will have available reproducible metropolitan map series, standardized reports for any geographic areas in the state, and the census reports for manufacturing, government, retail trade and agriculture.

The Center was established at Capitol Campus under a cooperative agreement involving the U.S. Bureau of the

Census, the state government and Penn State. Capitol Campus was selected as the site for the Center for a number of reasons, SurrIDGE said. "Capitol's proximity to the state capitol was one factor," he said. Faculty and students in the Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning also have experienced working the census data and other statistical information through their academic responsibilities and involvement with the Institute of State and Regional Affairs. Located at Capitol, the Institute uses the resources of the campus in public service projects, explained SurrIDGE, who is a lecturer in the planning program and a planning analyst with the Institute. Through the Planning Program and the Institute, faculty have assisted federal, state and regional agencies with research and policy planning, have offered program advice to public officials and industry and have conducted training programs, conferences, seminars and workshops.

Under the agreement establishing the Center, the Census Bureau will provide the State Data Center with census data and other statistical information. A three-member staff at Capitol is responsible for establishing and maintaining the program that will make the information available to those who request it. The state is providing initial funding for the program, which is being run on a cost recovery basis.

"Users of the Center's services will pay for them at cost," SurrIDGE explained. All state agencies are required to use the center as their source of census data, under the Executive Order signed by the governor, he noted.

By having all state agencies use the Center as their primary census statistical resource, state government should reduce the possibility of costly and unnecessary duplication of data collection and processing by the different agencies.

In addition to the Center at Capitol Campus, the State Data Center Program will include regional data centers which will be located throughout the state. "These centers, which will be at libraries, planning agencies and college campuses, will have available much of the information on file at the Capitol Center," SurrIDGE said. "This statewide network will extend access to and use of statistical resources at the local level and more directly meet local needs." The State Data Center is in the process of identifying and inviting agencies and institutions to become affiliate centers. The majority of these centers

Although the Center does not yet have on hand all the information needed to offer full Data Center services, it has much of the essential data it needs and has been processing requests for information since September.

The Dope On Drugs

Presented in the public interest by the Department of Health Services: Jean Kresge, R.N. and Bonnie Petrosino, R.N.

Recently, attention has been focused by the press on the use of "look-a-like" drugs. These tablets are designed to mock amphetamines and barbiturates, but contain legal substances. It appears that Lewistown, Pennsylvania is the central point for their manufacture and distribution.

"Look-a-likes" are also known as: "uppers," "downers," "dexies," "yellow jackets," "black beauties," "speed," "christmas trees," "blues and clears," and "speed balls."

The "look-a-like" phenomena has been a great source of frustration for legislators and health care professionals given the unpredictability of their pharmacological reactions. Thirteen states have already banned the manufacture and distribution of these drugs. Pennsylvania is one of many more states conducting an all-out effort in the state legislature to ban their use.

WHAT ARE LOOK-A-LIKES AND WHY MAY THEY BE SO DANGEROUS? Basic ingredients of "look-a-likes" are generally ephedrine, phenylpropanolamine (PPL) and/or caffeine. Taken in controlled doses under a physician's direction there's likely to be little harm and even some temporary therapeutic effects for sufferers of allergies, runny noses from colds, and post-nasal drip. Even under controlled use, adverse reactions to these drugs include, but are not limited to: nervousness, elevated blood pressure, insomnia, restlessness, drowsiness and poor motor coordination. The dangers of "look-a-like" drugs are as follows:

1) Synergistic or overdose effects are the adverse physical reactions of mixing any combination of caffeine, ephedrine and PPL. These effects are incalculable prior to actual usage, yet may frequently lead to such life-threatening conditions as stroke, heart stoppage, kidney failure, respiratory failure, and convulsions.

2) Prolonged use of any of these substances can lead to such conditions as: Chronic paranoia, collapsed veins and arteries leading to pre-stroke conditions,

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The social life at Capitol Campus is really looking up. For more, see story on page 2.

READER Photo By Steve Myers Photo Club