

# Help for the ‘other’ drug victims

By Matt Crossman

Organisers of a free program helping Sunbury residents conquer isolation caused by a loved one's drug or alcohol addiction hope it will lead to the creation of a monthly support group.

Following the success of the first Action for Recovery course in September last year, Sunbury Community Health (SCH) will again foot the bill so a group of about 15 people can be part of the next six-week program, starting May 23.

SCH drug and alcohol team leader Jim Carlton said the course, delivered by the

Self Help Addiction Resource Centre, gave people information to help better understand addiction.

The course covers topics such as boundaries, guilt, worry, communication and acceptance. Participants are given workbooks that include strategies to help their families.

"Perhaps the most important thing is that it helps break the stigma," Mr Carlton said.

"It can be really tough for people who have a family member who's addicted.

"Not only do they put so much into caring for their loved one but there's often the shame of having other people know and, sometimes,

**“ A lot of people choose to keep it all to themselves ”**

- Jim Carlton

of losing everything. A lot of people choose to keep it all to themselves and it can be hard to break through."

The first program was organised after more than 70 people attended a community forum in Sunbury that focused on problems caused by the rising use of crystal methamphetamine (ice).

Mr Carlton said feedback about the program had been overwhelmingly positive, with people expressing a sense of relief upon discovering they were not alone.

Counsellors are also considering the establishment of a peer-based support group to give parents, siblings and other relatives a regular opportunity to discuss their issues.

"For many, the chance to meet with people who know exactly what they are going through will be life changing," Mr Carlton said.

Action for Recovery will be held from 6pm every Monday from May 23-June 27. Details: 1300 660 068 or arc@sharc.org.au