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Group stresses drug education

By Carrie Petersen

Representatives of Mothers Against Misuse and Abuse (MAMA) stopped by the Democrat-Herald Tuesday to talk about the importance of educating yourself about drugs.

The representatives, Executive Director Sandee Burbank, Jack Thomas and Alice Ivany, are on a three-week speaking tour. On Tuesday, they were also at a community meeting at the Corvallis public library.

MAMA is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1982 to provide a wholistic approach to substance abuse. Founders felt that focusing on illegal drugs as “bad” gave the false impression that legal drugs were safe and “good.”

MAMA pushes for education about all drugs — including alcohol and nicotine — so people can make responsible decisions.

“Most people want to act in their best interest,” Burbank said.

People aren’t educated about prescription medicine in the same way they are about illegal drugs, said Ivany, who has had her own trouble with prescription and over-the-counter medicine.

She said she was prescribed half-doses of Extra Strength Tylenol and as a result developed high blood pressure. She can’t tolerate narcotic pills either, so started talking with her doctor about medical marijuana.

Ivany said she was humiliated at the thought of using marijuana, but she became a medical marijuana cardholder. Since then, she has learned that she can take a pain-management drug in amounts with which she is comfortable.

Thomas, who also has a medical marijuana card, said that after he developed degenerative disc disease and related foot pain, his doctor prescribed ibuprofen, which eventually damaged his stomach and caused heartburn.

He later suffered from a pinched nerve in his leg, and was prescribed different pain medications, two of which “knocked” him out.

He said Tuesday that he is in pain all the time and that cannabis is

what helps him deal with the pain. Without cannabis, he said, he wouldn't be able to work.

For more information about MAMA, visit www.mamas.org.