

Islander brings scientific awareness to the epidemic of alcoholism

By Michaela Kennedy

Psychologist Santi Meunier has spent most of her adult life exploring the ravages of substance abuse. In her new book, "Dying for A Drink: the Hidden Epidemic of Alcoholism," Meunier presents hard evidence that proves alcoholism is not simply a bad choice, but a disease resulting from a combination of genetic, physical, and psychological factors. Environmental, social and spiritual factors also play a strong role in alcohol addiction, according to the book.

Citing references to a variety of medical and scientific periodicals, Meunier packs a systematic punch into her book. "I want to dispel the myths about alcoholism," Meunier notes. She brings to light that alcoholism is no longer thought of as a subjective diagnosis, but as a medical diagnosis of a brain disorder. "There's so much stigma and judgment in our society related to alcoholism. I want to clarify why it is a disease."

Research of alcohol dependency has become more sophisticated, Meunier continues. Scientists are working to isolate the alcohol gene. In the next few years, an



Santi Meunier

actual test will be able to prove alcohol is chemically connected. "We are basically chemistry," she points out.

Meunier has worked in the field of recovery for over 20 years, holding a long track record of private practice with troubled families. She points out that alcoholism ruins families, friendships, jobs and health. "Alcoholism is a three-fold disease. There is a physical addiction, an emotional dependency and a soul sickness, or spiritual dependency," she says.

As part of her scientific approach, Meunier has developed

a series of practical concepts and solutions she presents through speaking engagements and private practice. Her methods show how society stays emotionally blackmailed through addiction.

"Three outcomes are imminent for the alcoholic: finding success in a recovery program, being institutionalized or jailed, or facing an early death," she says. Her own step by step guide called the Holographic Treatment Program helps people who want more than "okay" sobriety, Meunier explains.

Meunier has moved from her personal experience of witnessing the devastating effects of alcohol in her own family to pioneering her three-level outpatient recovery program for adult children of alcoholics. She has helped troubled adolescents through developing abuse and addiction recovery programs for several residential schools.

Meunier has found through her research that relapse of alcohol abuse is very high, and has pushed on to research why. "We are not dealing with the problem holistically," she notes. Meunier recalls the 'Just Say No' program from the

1980s, saying, "It was a good start, but it did not look at why children start drinking." The average age that boys start drinking, she adds, is 11. "If the brain chemistry is low, that group will try to self-medicate," she explains. "They take the drink, and the chemical level goes up. For the first time, they have a feel-good chemistry." But over time, the chemistry level drops lower, creating more imbalance.

Those already familiar with Meunier's work have witnessed how her program, "Practical Spirituality for Fearless Living," uses ground-breaking tools for personal and professional growth. She notes that fear is the ultimate robber that keeps us from fulfilling our life purpose. "The world needs us to

be a success," she adds.

Meunier is planning a series of speaking engagements geared toward high school- and middle school-aged children. She also plans corporate seminars that address addiction in the workplace. "The amount it costs us as a society is huge," she says. "I am becoming a spokesperson for the reality and solutions in an addicted society."

Meunier's book is now available online at the publisher's Web site, www.iUniverse.com, and also can be ordered through Amazon Books or any Barnes and Noble outlet. Jamestown residents may order signed copies directly from the author by calling her at 667-7399, or visiting her new Web site, www.santimeunier.com, which is expected to be online in March.

Two Islanders join Spanish Honor Society

Eight of Millie Howe's grade 7 and 8 students at the Pennfield School were recently inducted into the Sociedad Honoraria Hispanica De Amistad. Among the inductees were Callie Reis and Hailey Novis, both from Jamestown.

This group helps create an understanding between Hispanic and American cultures. The Spanish Honor Society is currently doing many activities to promote interest in the Spanish language and culture, including a children's book drive for the Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy and peer tutoring.

ISLAND REALTY SELECT



CUSTOM VICTORIAN VILLAGE HOME

Located at the south end of the village, this home offers privacy with mature landscaping on 1/2 acre. There is a formal living room with a fireplace and French doors, a formal dining room and 5 bedrooms. In addition, there is a large detached garage with additional space above. **\$1,050,000.**



NARRAGANSETT HOME NEAR BEACHES
Open living area with cathedral ceiling. Newly painted interior with partially finished lower level. Great location for beachgoers. **New Listing: \$299,900**



CONTEMPORARY BUNGALOW
Vaulted ceilings with an open floor plan. Passive solar heating. Lovely gardens and low stone walls. **Newly Priced: \$459,000**



SOUTH SHORES BRIGHT CAPE
Cape interior on double lot with room for expansion. Open floor plan. **Newly Priced: \$369,000**

401-423-2200

WWW.ISLANDREALTYRI.COM

