

# San Francisco Chronicle

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## Only in The Chronicle

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### Today's exclusive stories:

**Campaign 2010, Sunday Profile and Drug Abuse** on A1, **Native Son** on A2, **Matier & Ross** and **Willie Brown** on C1, **John Shea** and **Gwen Knapp** on B1, **Scott Ostler** on B2, and **Tom Stienstra** on B10.



## TOP OF THE NEWS

### World/Nation

▶▶ **Education reform:** The Obama administration proposes to overhaul the No Child Left Behind law championed by George W. Bush. **A11**

### Sporting Green

▶▶ **Bears unbowed:** Cal remains optimistic despite losing to Washington in the Pac-10 tournament title game. **B1**

### Bay Area

▶▶ **Parade:** Market Street turns green for St. Patrick's Day. **C1**

▶▶ **Fire:** Four-alarm blaze hits Walnut Creek lumber yard. **C2**

### Business

▶▶ **DIY hacking:** Easy-to-use software now makes it simple for non-techies to deliver malware. **D1**



### Style

San Francisco ink — Body Art Expo. **N1**

### Travel

Shanghai hosts World Expo 2010. **M1**

### Spring forward

Daylight-saving time began today at 2 a.m. Set clocks ahead one hour.



## POLITICS

# GOP tough talk meets some stiff resistance



## DRUG ABUSE

# Pill parties give teens entry into addiction

By Kevin Fagan

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

It started out with a pal saying painkillers could be a cool high. Joe was 15. He wanted the high, and he wanted to be cool.

FROM THE COVER

# Pill parties becoming more popular

Drugs from page A1

tive wonder of “pharma parties” — and before long, the horror of addiction.

Pharma parties, where kids get together to share drugs pilfered from their parents’ pill bottles, have been a known phenomenon for only a few years, experts say. But the phenomenon is getting worse.

### Drug use up

A study released this month by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America shows that 63 percent of American teenagers in grades nine to 12 believe prescription drugs are easy to steal from their parents’ medicine cabinets, up from 56 percent last year.

The same study shows that 20 percent of the kids in the same grade group have abused prescription medication at least once, up from similar surveys in 2000 showing about half that rate of abuse.

The problem appears to begin primarily in the middle class, experts say, among relatively comfortable kids who turn to pills — mostly painkill-



Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle

**Dr. Howard Kornfeld, shown near his Mill Valley office, says many teens think of pharmaceuticals as safe.**

2006, to 13,800. That constituted the majority of the 26,000 overdose deaths in the United States in 2006 from both legal and illegal drugs.

At least one youth in California has died from

ment providers in the nation. “Kids don’t understand the risk factor. They don’t realize that even though they may think of them as a recreational thing, prescription drugs can lead to as

so many that I had to barter pills with my friends, sell and buy to keep it up.”

Once Joe was enslaved to pills, a friend turned him on to heroin, which cost about half as much

and music. I mean, I really liked rap, and that’s all about bling and smoking weed and drinking.

“One of the most important things I learned is you don’t hang out

idea of that scares me to death,” said Peter, who became addicted to OxyContin out of friends’ medicine cabinets as a teenager, and needed a stint in rehab to get clean. The 24-year-old San Francisco man didn’t want his full name used because his recovery philosophy requires that he not draw attention to himself.

“I mean, I was addicted so badly I went to heroin and crack, and even I wouldn’t put my hand in a bowl and just take whatever,” he said.

### Stress a factor

Dr. Howard Kornfeld of Mill Valley specializes in treating youthful addicts at his Recovery Without Walls clinic, and he said his experience is that many kids turn to pharmaceuticals initially because they are just experimenting and think they are safe.

“But some of them have underlying depression or anxiety disorders, or they are painfully shy, and they start taking pills to function or to feel good at a party,” Kornfeld said. “Early on, the kids can even look good, take tests