

# Designer drug fans plan legal parties

Associated Press

DALLAS -- While drug counselors and agents stand helplessly by, fanciers of the "designer drug" Ecstasy are planning a gala sendoff for its last days of legal use this weekend.

Sales of the drug are booming in Dallas nightspots where it is sold openly and — until midnight Sunday — legally. Ecstasy parties are being planned around town, and some people are stockpiling supplies as if these were the last days before Prohibition.

The new federal ban will make possession of the amphetamine a felony, carrying maximum penalties of 15 years in jail and a \$125,000 fine.

Medical experts have issued strong warnings about the drug's potential hazards, saying preliminary research indicates it may cause brain damage. But the drug's final legal appearance has become a social event for some.

At a shop in the Texas Ranch, a local bar where the management openly sells Ecstasy for \$20 per tablet, sales have climbed sharply, the *Dallas Times Herald* reported Friday.

"They're coming from all over" to buy it, said a shop manager who asked that he not be named. "Older people, younger people, black, white — a real variety."

Many other bars are buzzing with talk of private Ecstasy parties.

"The crowd I run with is going to have a couple hundred people celebrating it (the deadline) Friday," said a man in Popsicle Toes, a north Dallas club.

Frustrated drug counselors say they don't think many users realize Ecstasy may be as dangerous as other controlled drugs they may shun.

"It's a very dangerous drug," said Roy May, a counselor at Help Is Possible, a drug treatment center. "According to reports we've gotten here, they (users) go into shakes and have palpitations. I think it should have been illegal a long time ago."