

“To stay on course you must follow your own North Star, your sense of who you truly are.”

- Mary Pipher, Ph.D.
“Reviving Ophelia”



TEENAGE PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM

Winter 2008

Vol. 12 No. 39

A Community Coalition of Concerned Citizens of Yavapai County

TAPP Partners:

- Catholic Charities Community Services
- Girl Scouts – Arizona Cactus-Pine Council, Inc.
- Humboldt Unified School District
- Youth Count
- Prescott Unified School District
- Yavapai Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Yavapai County Community Health Services
- Chino Valley School District

Mission Statement:

We advocate for reducing adolescent pregnancy, enhancing youth leadership, and promoting healthy parenting among teen parents through community collaboration in the Yavapai Region.

TAPP is a program of Catholic Charities Community Services

New Year...New Name

TAPP becomes North Star Youth Partnership

After 10 successful years in Yavapai County, Catholic Charities' Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Program (TAPP) is changing their name to **North Star Youth Partnership**.

“The new name better reflects our services,” said **Cathy Peterson**, Yavapai regional director. “North Star describes the region we serve and helps people know we serve as a guiding light for youths in Northern Arizona.”

Since its inception in 1997, the program has grown to include much more than teenage pregnancy prevention. It now includes a variety of health and youth development programs throughout Yavapai County.

“We have come a long way in the last decade and look forward to serving even more youths and parents in the years to come. Thank you to the community for supporting our initiatives to sustain a supportive community for healthy youth development. Thank you to the North Star staff for their commitment and dedication.”

--Diane R. DeLong
North Star Director



Over the past 10 years, nearly 34,000 youths have participated in the agency's youth development programs and activities such as TAPP Players Drama Troupe, Teens Taking Action, Baby...Ready or Not, poster and writing contests, and special events such as Teen Maze, Girls & Sports Day, and after prom /safe graduation positive alternative events. To learn more about North Star's programming, check out the new website at www.northstaryouth.org or call Diane DeLong at 928-778-2531, ext. 3414.

Federal grant awarded to Catholic Charities

In October, Catholic Charities East Valley and Yavapai County teen pregnancy prevention programs were awarded a \$600,000 grant by the Department of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children & Families via the Community-Based Abstinence Education Program. The grant provides funding for abstinence education and youth development activities in Maricopa, Yavapai and Coconino Counties. The award is available up to five years and Catholic Charities was one of about 60 agencies awarded funding in this highly competitive grant cycle. About \$200,000 has been designated for Yavapai County programs and activities.

Opportunities for involvement

TEEN MAZE

Planning is underway for Teen Maze 2008. This year's event will be held April 23, 24 and 25 at the Prescott Activity Center in downtown Prescott. Volunteers are needed to help in a variety of positions. Call **Chris Lange** at 778-2531, ext. 3402 for more information. A Teen Maze will also be held in the Verde Valley March 5-7. For more information, call **Shelley Konecny** at 928-274-0466.

GIRLS & SPORTS DAY

Girls & Sports Day will be held on Saturday, May 17, 2008 at the Prescott YMCA. Pre-registration will begin in March. This year's event will include the Smart Girl's Sports Fair and a variety of sports stations for girls ages 7-16. The event will be limited to 250 girls.

North Star fundraiser increases HIV/AIDS awareness

North Star Youth Partnership is selling coffee mugs and mouse pads featuring student-designed artwork to raise funds and awareness to combat HIV/AIDS in Yavapai County.

Money raised from sales will benefit the organization's youth programs and **Northland Cares**, an HIV/AIDS service organization offering care and support services in Northern Arizona. The mugs cost \$10 and the mouse pads \$5.

According to UNAIDS estimates, there are currently 39.5 million people living with HIV, including 2.3 million children. During 2006, some 4.3 million people became newly infected with the virus.

"The mugs and mouse pads can help raise awareness about a worldwide problem that deserves our attention," said Diane DeLong, North Star program director. "All of the

money that is raised will benefit two amazing organizations that seek to educate the public about this devastating disease."

Former TAPP member and Prescott High School graduate **Michaela McShane** created the artwork that is featured on the mugs and mouse pads. As a participant in TAPP's *Teens Taking Action* program, McShane needed to complete an independent service project. She created the paintings, which have also been featured on posters, postcards and notepads, to meet the needs of her community project. The idea stemmed from a presentation made by a woman in the community with AIDS.

"It was really a wake-up call," said McShane. "I had never met anyone with AIDS. It had seemed so distant, but I realized that it was right here in my community."

To purchase the mugs or mouse pads, contact Diane DeLong at 778-2531, ext. 3414.

Teens needed for new peer mentoring program

Imagine...Learning by giving...Mastering knowledge as you solve real problems facing your community...Being recognized as citizens and honored as leaders

Positive youth development activities outside of a school setting have been linked with decreases in substance abuse, youth violence, gang activity, teen pregnancy and school drop-out rates, and have been connected with improvement in academic achievement and school and community connectedness (NIOST, 2006). North Star Youth Partnership plays a critical role in the positive development of youth by helping teens to become involved in their communities, and gain and strengthen competencies needed to develop into healthy, productive adults.

North Star Youth Partnership is piloting a new **Peer Assistance Leadership Program** to tap into the potential of young people to make a difference in their schools and communities. **Tori Gant**, Director of Training, PAL – Peer Assistance and Leadership – from Austin, Texas, will train all peer mentors. The training will focus on communication skills, group dynamics, self-awareness, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Upon successful completion of the training, teens are placed in peer-to-peer situations (e.g. tutoring, mentoring and other leadership positions on campus and in after-school programs). All Peer Mentors will also be registered as Youth Volunteer Corps members and assist in community service projects through North Star and Americorps. Applications are now being accepted and all sophomores and juniors are invited to apply. Application forms are available through the North Star office or by contacting **Chris Lange**, Teens Taking Action/Peer Mentoring coordinator, at 778-2531, ext. 3402.



Teens: Sex Now Leads to Unhappiness

Many young people indicate that being sexually active leads to less happiness, especially in the long run. Recently, an extensive survey (conducted by the Associated Press and MTV) of more than 100 questions was asked of 1,280 people ages 13-24 regarding the general nature of happiness among America's young people. On issues of sexuality, the survey showed that being sexually active actually leads to less happiness among 13-17 year olds. For those who are aged 18-24, the survey showed that sex might lead to more happiness in the moment, but not in general. Some results of the survey proved to be very disconcerting. While 72% of whites said they were happy with life in general, just 56% of blacks and 51% of Hispanics said the same about their lives. Lastly, 62% of those surveyed said they think they will be happier in the future than they are now (those over 18 years of age were more optimistic). However, many anticipate a more difficult life than their parents had.¹

¹The Associated Press-MTV Poll Conducted by Knowledge Networks, Associated Press, April 16-23, 2007, pp. 1-81.

Poll: Family Ties Key to Happy Kids, Associated Press, Fox News, August 19, 2007

Teens given the opportunity to experience the realities of parenting

In addition to North Star's weeklong facilitation of health education curricula, participating middle school students in Prescott now have the opportunity to see first-hand what it is like to be a parent.

The **Baby...Ready or Not** program provides participating students with programmable life-like "dolls" that simulate various true-to-life responsibilities of parenting. Students are responsible for attending to their assigned "baby's" needs (e.g. soothing, feeding, changing diapers, etc.) over a 72-hour weekend. The dolls involve family/friends in the students' experience, open parent-child dialogue about teen pregnancy, and provide the students with a first-hand look at the emotional and social effects of parenting at an early age.



The program was piloted at **Prescott Mile High Middle School** in December and here's what the participants had to say:

"She was crying all night last night and I didn't get an hour of sleep. I guess I'm kind of glad I'm giving her back tomorrow."

"You don't get as much freedom when you take care of a baby and you have to take care of it every hour."

"Having a baby changes your life. You have to take care of a baby and so you don't have time for yourself and your social life."

The **Baby...Ready or Not** program has been organized by North Star staff members **Krystal Koons**, **Denise Fifield** and **Kasey Shaver**. For more information about scheduling the program or to participate, call Kasey Shaver at 778-2531, ext. 3427. We are also looking for volunteers to help assist in the program and distribution of infant simulators to program participants.

Gasp!! You mean abstinence education actually works??

While the mainstream media doesn't like to print it and opponents of abstinence education like to ignore it, more and more studies are proving what many already know. The teens that participate in abstinence education ARE learning, they ARE understanding the risks of sexual activity, and many ARE choosing abstinence and secondary virginity. And if you think abstinence education is wasted on high school students, one look at the North Star/TAPP survey results from a variety of Yavapai County high schools will probably cause one to rethink.

Noted researcher, **Dr. Stan Weed**, and the team at the Institute for Research and Development have yet another example of successful abstinence education outcomes. The following article, "An Abstinence Program's Impact on Cognitive Mediators and Sexual Initiation" is a wonderful representation of the longtime work they do at the Institute. The article will be published in the January/February 2008 issue of the *American Journal of Health Behavior* and describes how an abstinence program curriculum reduced the rate of virgin adolescents' sexual initiation by about one-half, twelve months after their participation in the program. This study provides abstinence educators everywhere with credible evidence that abstinence education really does work.

North Star welcomes two new Americorps

North Star/Catholic Charities has received two Americorps positions through the **Youth Volunteer Corps of America (YVCA)** grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. The purpose of Americorps is to provide an agency with the opportunity to build and expand a youth program.

Denise Fifield will serve as the Americorps in the Prescott area and work on creating new sports programs for girls and **Shelly Konecny** is serving the Verde Valley working with the Verde Valley Teen Maze and Teen Outreach Program. In addition to their responsibilities with North Star, they will also participate in three National Days of Service including **Martin Luther King Day**, **National and Global Youth Service Day** in April and **Join Hands Day** on May 3.

Denise, who is also a nurse at Yavapai Regional Medical Center, is married and has two sons. Shelly may be better known as Shelly Harrison, the popular radio personality on KQST Radio. Shelly and her husband and four children live in the Verde Valley.

“Both Denise and Shelly bring a wealth of experience to the program and we are honored to have them serve as our Americorps,” said Diane DeLong, director of North Star Youth Partnership.

Shelly can be reached at 928-274-0466 and Denise at 928-778-2531, ext. 3460.

New program designed to keep girls physically active

The more active a girl is, the more active she will be as an adult. Unfortunately, we have created a generation of sedentary youth. Inactive girls are in danger of leading an unhealthy, unhappy life.

GO GIRL GO! is a project of the **Women's Sports Foundation** that combines physical activity with an educational intervention that focuses on reducing and preventing health-risk behaviors. Girls can learn how to cope with circumstances and change behaviors that threaten their well-being and embrace a physically active lifestyle. The program is designed to be presented by adult leaders in a sport environment. The program features true-life stories and life lessons from champion athletes like Tamika Catchings, Mia Hamm and Jennifer Rodriguez.

North Star will partner with the **Prescott YMCA** to present this weekly program to middle school girls beginning in February 2008. The free program will be coordinated by **Denise Fifield**, Americorps for North Star. For more information, call Denise at 778-2531, ext. 3460.

Some Facts...

- ❖ Girls will receive 250,000 commercial messages by the time they are 17 years old, telling them what to eat and what to look like, but not encouraging them to be physically active.
- ❖ Girls who feel good about themselves are much less likely to participate in behaviors that are health risks.
- ❖ There are social benefits to playing sports...besides building good friendships, girls learn teamwork and how to strive toward goals.

