

Milwaukee Brighter Futures

A Better Community Through Prevention

Summary of Meeting: May 18, 2010

BF agencies attack teen pregnancy rate issues with various strategies

Milwaukee's ongoing crisis in high rates of teen pregnancies is being addressed on many fronts, as participants at the May 20th Milwaukee Brighter Futures meeting learned.

The co-chair of the MBFI's Teen Pregnancy



Anthony McHenry reads questions in "Jeopardy" game.

Prevention Network (TPPN), Anthony McHenry, of the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center (SSNC), said that unless the community gets a handle on teen pregnancy prevention many problems will continue. "We're hoping to change that," he said.

He led the audience into a game of "Jeopardy," based on the popular TV show, in which the questions involved issues of teen pregnancy. He said the questions in the "Jeopardy" game were devised by the youth at SSNC.

Scenes from the session can be seen on You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yw0v3OjWAZw>.

FAMILY UNITY NIGHT

McHenry said TPPN is focusing on Family Unity Night (F.U.N.) to be held the second Thursday of

October (Oct. 14). He said that the purpose of the F. U. N. was to encourage communication between parents and their children, since research shows that children raised in families that regularly eat together are more likely to have positive outcomes. Research also shows that teens really want to get information about sex from their parents, even though they often shrug and indicate no interest.

Racquel Bell, coordinator for MBFI, said that the major F.U.N. celebration will be at the Italian Community Center on Oct. 14 for 250 participating families. Participating agencies will select the families for the event.

There will be a "pep rally" and "kickoff" event on June 24th at Washington Park Bandshell for participating families, she said.

In an effort to gain more public exposure to F.U.N., Bell said Radio station V100 will be providing with plenty of PSAs and will have a presence at the October event.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

McHenry said the other goal of TPPN is to get the word out to those youth who do not participate in program. After sorting through many ideas, he said, TPPN decided on creating "Youth Summits." The program started in 2008 and so far six have been held.

Jody Rhodes of the Neu-Life Family Center said the Youth Summits have included participation of many of the MBFI agencies; about half of the workshops are run by the youth of the Youth

Ambassadors program. The programs include workshops, give-aways, refreshments, a disk jockey, and other entertainment. She added that the “summits” are held at high schools and middle schools. No programs will be held this summer, so that the Ambassadors can concentrate on assisting in working on F.U.N.

Rhodes quoted one boy as telling her: “My workshop is crackin’.”

Khalil Coleman, 23, one of the earlier of Youth Ambassadors, was introduced and described his personal story about how he got involved. Speaking of the Youth Ambassadors, he said that in the workshops, “The kids share many things, and the kids can open up about teen pregnancy,” he said. He said that if parents or adults are not talking to the kids about sex, they’ll be talking about it on the streets.

“We need to see if we can get more kids involved,” he said. “We need to show that we can prevent teen pregnancy.”

The Youth Ambassadors form teams to go out and talk about teen pregnancy prevention; they really work hard, noting “they could easily turn the other cheek, and walk away.”

“Young people have a lot of ideas and we need to give them an outlet to express them,” he said.



Jason Hargis seeks to answer question in ‘Jeopardy.’

The group produced a skit, which was shown to the group. The Ambassadors also have developed two Facebook pages.

The Youth Ambassadors and other activities of the TPPN is funded through the United Way,

Milwaukee Health Dept, and Community Advocates.

Coleman said the Ambassadors are working with a marketing group to create fliers that ask: “Have you seen me?” “Lost” ... “I’m a 15 year old girl and I lost my childhood, because I became pregnant.”

He said he has also written a book, “A Time and Place in the Life of B and K,” about two young boys who grew up in ‘hood’ who faced a life with the lack of opportunity; yet, they decided to work on trying to improve the community.

The film trailer, “2028,” was shown and it can be viewed at <http://babycanwait.org>.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN INCIDENCE

JoCasta Zamarripa, of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, distributed statistics showing Milwaukee’s teen birth rates, with African-American teens giving birth at by a 5 to 1 margin when compared with others. And, she noted, only 40% of teen moms graduate from high school.

DEALING WITH TEENS

Sally Ladky, of the Wisconsin Abstinence Coalition, presented additional information on how teen pregnancy affects teen girls, relying on a presentation from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen & Unplanned Pregnancy.

She pointed out that teens are “growing children” in the throes of physical and mental development. “Just because of they’re six feet four, they may still be a child inside,” she said.

She said that teens need time to develop responsibility. She said, “They have to take risks and we need to give them opportunity to take risks. Yet, the community needs to provide protection so as to save them by themselves.”

Factors that influence the youth involve brain development, in which teens learn by experience. When a teen fouls up, many adults ask “What were you thinking?” Ladky said, “The truth is that they weren’t.” Many of a teen’s choices are by “gut reaction,” she said, based on they’re own

self-centeredness, a “feel-good” response, and being “in the moment.”

Furthermore, sex is built in our brains, she said, with the brain chemical dopamine acting to make a youth feel good after sex, along with providing a “rush” and emotional “high.” She listed other chemicals in our brains that affect sexual behaviors, including oxytocin, serotonin, and endomorphins.

So-called “raging hormones” have little influence on teens, she said, and youth need to be taught how their brains work and that sexual experiences will impact their futures.

She said there are five “C’s” in youth development:

Competence in building abilities and skills, confidence, connection (such as building positive bonds), character and caring.

Ladky cited a survey that showed parents have more influence on the life of their youth than they realize, since 88% of teens have said it



Lance Jones looks for help in answering from his team members.

would have been easier to avoid teen pregnancy if they’d been able to have open discussions with their parents. She said there’s a need to educate parents about adolescence. “Go where the parents are,” she said. “I’d love to see parenting programs in workplaces.”

A sixth factor is working with men to get them to recognize how they can lead in the delaying of initial sexual encounters. Men need to be made aware of the punitive nature of absentee fatherhood and all its encounters.

It was also announced that on May 1 the Family Planning Waiver was extended to males, making the program available to both sexes, ages 15 to 44. It’s a Medicaid program that provides family planning services and supplies for persons age 15 through 44 who are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL). The main goal of this family planning project is to help women avoid unintended pregnancy.

MCAPS REPORT

The report of the Milwaukee Child Abuse Prevention Services coalition was provided by Jan Buchler of The Parenting Network. The coalition is doing strategic planning, she said.

She announced the meeting schedule for various MCAPS committees: the Public Policy Committee at 2:30 p.m. June 14, (second Monday of month) at United Way, 225 W. Vine St., and the Teen Parent Work Group on the same date at 1 p.m., also at United Way.

The Family Resource Connection meets every other month at 9:30 a.m. at various sites, with directors of family resource centers meeting at 9 a.m. The next meeting is set for Tuesday, July 27, at a site to be determined later.

She said that the committee had helped develop the “Welcome Baby” program that is now operating in seven of the family resource centers. The “Welcome Baby” series is for any expectant and new parents. She said, “It’s been fantastic.”

Announcements:

PrideFest is second weekend in June. Project Q will run the youth area from noon to 8 p.m. at Maier Festival Park to provide education for gay, lesbian, transgendered, bisexual and curious youth.

The Milwaukee Health Department is operating a **Men’s Health program** at 3200 N. 35th on June 15th for teen and adult males. June is Men’s Health Month.