



Brighter Futures

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Teen Pregnancy Prevention Network using many ideas to fulfill its goals

One of the key efforts of the Brighter Futures initiative is the prevention of teen pregnancies, and a major part of that effort is the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Network.

Anthony McHenry, of Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, Network chair, told the May meeting of Brighter Futures that the Network is doing some "unique things and some common sense things" in teen pregnancy prevention. He noted that there are many groups that have some involvement in the effort and said that the Network is "at the center" of the activity. He said it is open to anybody with an interest in reducing the numbers of teen pregnancies. There is a lot of resource-sharing available, offering many opportunities for those interested in making an impact.

He mentioned a program that came out of MASH (Milwaukee Alliance for Sexual Health) which deals with policy issues affecting the prevention program.

YOUTH AMBASSADORS. The program is Youth Ambassadors, which involves teens reaching out to other teens. The goal is to involve the youth in doing prevention education strategies. Their mission

is very diverse, including talking to teens about prevention and working behind the scenes to help adults understand how best to reach the hard-to-reach young people. The Ambassadors will be working on other strategies to help get the message out to families across Milwaukee. There are about 40 young people in the Ambassador program and they are "excited about what their doing," he said.

He cited the Ambassadors work at summits being held around the city aimed at involving those youth who don't come to social service agencies, "so we are holding summits at schools around town." The Ambassadors try to do some creative things to help motivate the kids to become more enthusiastic about the effort.

He said the group goes to the schools where kids are in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades and "hopefully are still in school."

YOUTH SUMMIT. Some 150 kids participated at a summit at Urban Waldorf and, he said, the "feedback was wonderful." He said it was important to get the reactions of the students, teachers and principals to show that the program is working and does have an impact.

The summits, he said, are designed to make a program that the kids want to come to and enjoy. "It's something the kids like, the teachers enjoy and the principals rave about," he said.

He said the Network is planning a large Youth Summit for youth in Brighter Futures agency programs, covering some 200 to 300 kids during the summer. In the past, the Network has held a number of events where the teens are treated like the "super stars" that they are, with a sitdown meal and with adults serving them.

INVOLVING ADULTS. The Network is also involved with other teen pregnancy prevention efforts, such as those of MASH and United Way, he said.

"If we could only get the adults to communicate with their kids about drugs and alcohol and sexual behaviors, we'd have more success," he said, quoting an expert. "Unfortunately, that's not happening. Even knowledgeable parents are not spending enough time talking with their children about their values and encouraging them to make positive choices."

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Network seeking to involve whole families

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The Network is trying to get back to old family values in which the families get together to talk with their children. To respond to that, the Network is planning its third annual Family Unity Night on Thursday, Oct. 8. The F.U.N. program will provide an opportunity for parents to "make time to get together with the children in a family meal to talk and to share," McHenry said.

The goal is to get every single household in Milwaukee to plan to have a family meal on that night as a way to alert families to the need for ongoing communication with their children.

F.U.N. PROGRAM. There is a proclamation from the Mayor on the F.U.N. program and efforts are being made to involve the media, he said.

The effort will provide ways to assist parents in effectively sharing with their children their beliefs, he said.

Most youth don't know what their parents believe about teen pregnancy and it is important that those values be shared, he said.

Family Unity Night is about "sharing, sharing, sharing," he said in conclusion.

The Network is also working with the Milwaukee Public School system as it seeks to alter its curriculum in prevention, he said.

A GREAT SUCCESS. Jody Rhodes, of Neu-Life Center, reported on the Youth Summit held Friday, May 6 at Urban Waldorf School. Some 115 youth and 40

adults attended with a keynote speaker from Norris Adolescent Center opening the full-day program. There were giveaways, workshops and lunch. "We try to keep it exciting for the kids," she said. "It's kind of like an in-house field trip. We have a DJ to kind of set the mood for 'fun.'"

They all get tee-shirts at the end and the kids all had fun, she said.

The program involves working within the structure of each particular school, she said. In the Urban Waldorf setting, she said, the kids stayed in their regular home-rooms, since they were used to that structure.

"It is a lot of fun and it's just for the day. It's not an over-nighter," she said, speaking of the proposed Youth Summit for the summer.

McHenry noted that while many agencies do not have teen pregnancy prevention as a goal, they should still consider having their youth involved in the Network's programs. He said all programs that serve youth are linked and that positive results come from all sorts of efforts.

"My personal belief is that the key to ending teen pregnancy is building up young people," he said. "If we're building up young people so that they have a healthy feeling about who they are, they are more likely to make the right decision whether it is using condoms, not having sex, or not committing armed robbery or not skipping school. Kids need to feel better about themselves. Everybody who works on helping kids is engaged in the teen pregnancy whether that's your mission or not."

VISIT

Our website

<http://www.milwaukeebrighterfutures.org>

Agency of the Month: **Sista Pride**

The Boys and Girls Club's Sista Pride program works with teen girls on self esteem, character-building and issues that deal with teen girls, Sandy Malone said in describing the work of her program.

She said the agency has been using a new program to work with girls on anger management issues with a new curriculum. She said that the agency found "across the board that teen girls were having issues pertaining to anger." That programming has been a positive, she said, and the agency is seeking to add more to deal with the issue.

She reported that the Sista Pride "Youth of a Year" winner was featured on WTMJ-TV. The youth did well in the statewide competition and is going in July to compete in national competition. She is a teen facilitator with Sista Pride.

Malone outlined other activities. The swine flu affected the programming for a while, but the club activities have

since resumed to their regular levels.

On May 6th Sista Pride participated in a Teen Pregnancy program at Bucketworks, doing the play, "Rella," written by Nakita Caldwell, a Boys and Girls Club program manager. Teens auditioned for parts and the play was well-received, she said. The play addresses critical issues facing teens today, including teen pregnancy and kids coming from broken homes. She said the group plans to offer the play again and will inform Brighter Futures participants about future performances.

The group has continued efforts to promote activities for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month, utilizing teams of youth going to various schools to discuss the issue. Their theme is to tell girls about their bodies and to urge abstinence and protection practices. The program urges the girls to ask questions and to seek resources.

Issues raised for youth programming

Listed below are the ideas expressed at the meeting for possible inclusion in the Youth Issues Paper developed for submission for Community Block Grant programs. BF Consultant Jan Wilberg led the discussion. The items are grouped roughly into categories.

Teen pregnancy prevention strategies:

- Programs to build self-esteem among youth
- Self-empowerment
- Character-building

Self-empowerment programs that:

- Build character, through developing a positive value system.
- Improve health of individual, with particular emphasis on obesity, asthma, diabetes
- Restores hope to those who have had loss in their life.
- Lead to youth making right choices.
- Heighten awareness of youth in their possible choices.
- Recognize some youth no longer have the innocence of childhood.

Develop programs that invest in developing lifetime skills

and talents.

- Arts and music programs
- Entrepreneurship
- Employment skills to instill work ethic
- Efforts to provide youth with the skills and understanding to see opportunities
- Offer skills to permit youth to move between cultures
- Strengthen connection between adults and youth

Offering "positive values" through example and better communications

- Developing strategies to provide longterm individual connections between youth and adults
- Providing skills that deal with family dynamics, including those when a teen becomes the "adult" in the family
- Effective monitoring to promote internet safety and cell phone safety

Prevention of violence

- Strengthening relationships by building understanding of gender tendencies
- Cultural diversity training and strategies