

Alliance aims to prevent teens' risky behaviors

By Jody K. Althouse Centre Daily Times

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My son doesn't drink. My daughter doesn't do drugs. Pregnant? Not my daughter, not my son.

Sound familiar? Parents don't always see clearly when it comes to their teen's behavior, relationships or social activities. Unfortunately, in today's society parent/teen communication often gets lost in the daily shuffle of life and many teens are left to make decisions on their own.

What was he thinking? How could she? Why did they do that?

The fact is, teens often make snap judgments based on impulse, leaving little time to sort through the pros and cons. Some of those hasty decisions may involve having unprotected sex, being sexually promiscuous, or using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs.

The consequences can be monumental to the teens, their families and their friends.

Centre County cares about teens, and there are many community members willing to reach out and do something to help prevent teens from making mistakes that could drastically change their lives. In August 2009, under the direction of Centre County Judge Thomas Kistler, a conversational journey into the realm of teen sexuality and unhealthy teen relationships began. This conversation brought forth the need for action, hence the formation of the Centre Alliance for Healthy Relationships.

The mission statement of the alliance is to "empower our youth to build healthy relationships, to make sound decisions, and to reduce their involvement and engagement in sexually risky behaviors."

Is this really necessary? My teen would never get involved in risky behavior. I know all my teen's friends; they would never do anything like that. My teen isn't sexually active. Let's look at the facts:

- Three in 10 girls in this country become pregnant by age 20. (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2009)
- 83 percent of teens don't talk to their parents about sex because they're "worried about their parent's reaction." (The Media Project, Studio City, Calif., 2010)
- 57 percent of teens know someone who has been physically, sexually or verbally abused in a dating relationship. (Liz Claiborne Inc., conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005).

Alliance members include county professionals from all areas of service. The one thing they all have in common is that they all care about teens. In order to reach teens and their parents on multiple levels, there are five activity groups within the Centre Alliance for Healthy Relationships: community outreach; education; legal system; faith-based; and medical. All work together to put into place strategies and programs to combat the rising challenges for the young people of Centre County.

In Judge Kistler's words: "We hope we can change teens' behavior before there are tragic and irreversible consequences."

If you care about a teen, please join us.

The Centre Alliance for Healthy Relationships is co-chaired by Jody K. Althouse and Judge Thomas K. Kistler. All Centre County residents are invited to join an activity group and/or attend the full alliance quarterly meetings. For more information about the alliance, contact Althouse at the Centre County Women's Resource Center at 238-7066 or email jalthouse@ccwrc.org.

Read more: <http://www.centredaily.com/2011/08/31/2895489/alliance-aims-to-prevent-teens.html#ixzz1a1uYO5sr>