

THE
NATIONAL
CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY



Snapshots *from* the Front Line III

LESSONS FROM FAITH-BASED EFFORTS TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

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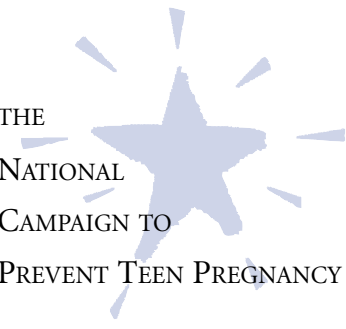
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Preface

A central tenet of the philosophy of the National Campaign is that preventing teen pregnancy is as much an issue of values and morality as it is of public health. If that is so, faith leaders and religious institutions have a central role in our common effort to help teens avoid too-early pregnancy and childbearing. While politicians and policy-makers have recently focused on faith-based efforts to solve social problems in general, relatively little attention has been paid to the particular power that religion and faith-based programs can wield in preventing teen pregnancy. This pamphlet, which is released in conjunction with the report, *Keeping the Faith: The Role of Religion and Faith Communities in Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, offers some lessons that the National Campaign has learned from innovative faith-based programs that are doing promising work around the country. It is the third in the National Campaign's series of *Snapshots from the Front Line*.

Of course, as the title suggests, this is not a comprehensive review of faith-based programs, nor does it evaluate the effect of these interventions; instead, this monograph offers a snapshot of what is happening in communities around the country. In fact, while the programs profiled here appear promising, there is no data available to understand the impact of faith-based programs on rates of teen pregnancy or related measures. However, many of these efforts offer the kinds of support and activities to young people that research suggests make a difference in reducing teen pregnancy and promoting healthy adolescent development more broadly, including opportunities for community service, youth development pro-

grams, connectedness to caring adults and positive peers, and education programs with strong and consistent messages about values.

Over its five-year history, the National Campaign’s Task Force on Religion and Public Values has led an effort to encourage faith-based groups in the important work they are *already* doing for young people, to convince community-based leaders focused on preventing teen pregnancy to see religious institutions as allies, and to bring together local religious and secular leaders to do more to reduce adolescent pregnancy. We’ve convened local meetings in six cities around the country, distributed publications targeted both to religious and secular leaders, and given presentations at meetings of secular leaders about the importance of collaborating with religious groups. Throughout our work, we have learned important lessons about preventing teen pregnancy from faith-based institutions all across this country. Perhaps most importantly, these groups have demonstrated that the problem can be addressed on many different levels and that even the most modest effort can make a real difference in the lives of teens. There is much to celebrate: community service programs, youth groups, faith-based abstinence and sex education curricula, marriage education and promotion, health services, and the list goes on.



Religious congregations and other faith-based groups are well-positioned to provide adult guidance to young people.

Because religious congregations are naturally multi-generational, they can easily provide teens with the much-needed adult attention and care that young people may not get elsewhere. Research suggests that feeling connected to an adult — whether a parent or another caring grown-up — can help a teen avoid many kinds of risky behavior (Resnick et al., 1997). Religious leaders and lay members of congregations offer formal and informal mentoring and can provide models of mature and responsible behavior. In Polk County, Iowa, for example, faith leaders recognized that young people, particularly those involved in the social services and judicial systems, really needed attentive adults in their lives. So they set up “Serve Our Youth Network,” a mentoring program for young men. Adolescent boys are paired with adults who have made a two-year commitment to the program. Each participating congregation sets up a support group to help mentors with transportation, financial support, and other needs. Upon entering the program, 90 percent of the young men involved have no religious affiliation, but, after becoming involved in the program, 50 percent of the teens attend church regularly with their mentor. The program has recently begun a similar mentoring program for teen fathers.



In Bentonville, Arkansas, young people and their parents gather together to discuss their views on sexuality as God's gift.

Another way that many faith communities provide guidance and mentoring for young people is by hosting Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops. The Girl Scouts of the United States is dedicated to providing character-building opportunities for girls, and they encourage religious instruction by parents and religious leaders because it helps girls understand the values expressed in the Girl Scout Promise Law. For example, the National Jewish Girl Scout Committee offers four different age-appropriate awards for Jewish Girl Scouts that range from examining one's history and religious background to exploring various topics in depth, such as women and ethics in the context of Judaism. All along, these programs encourage young people to work with their parents and other religious leaders to learn more about themselves and their faith.



Faith groups create communities of supportive peers — through congregation-based youth groups and other youth programs.

Peers are a powerful influence on teens' sexual decision-making. Contrary to popular opinion, however, much peer influence is actually positive. Research shows that teens who associate with low-risk peers are less likely to get pregnant or cause a pregnancy (Bearman & Brückner, 1999). Faith communities have long been a place for middle and high school students to find supportive groups of peers who share their values. Some congregations offer special worship services for youth as well.

The interdenominational Coast Hills Community Church in Aliso Viejo, California, offers a program called the "Middle School Oasis" that hosts separate worship services for middle school students on Sunday nights, as well as small group sessions during the week that convene outside of the church in schools and neighborhoods throughout the community. Student leaders and adult coaches lead the co-ed sessions, known as Discovery Groups, and provide a place for all students to find support and to learn about God. In the Discovery Groups, teens discuss issues that they face, such as peer pressure, temptation, and conflict with parents. In this safe atmosphere, participants are able to speak



Katheryn Kelly and Ricky Sanchez, members of a Middle School Oasis Discovery Group at the Coast Hills Community Church in Aliso Viejo, California, participate in a student-led discussion about relational conflict.

openly about difficult subjects. It is also a good opportunity for teens to hear feedback from the opposite sex, to appreciate other points of view, and to learn to respect differences. Teens involved in the program also

participate in service projects in their communities and abroad.

The Adams Center in Herndon, Virginia, offers a Saturday youth group program for Muslim teens. As a faith-based organization that believes strongly in abstinence until marriage, the Center offers workshops on the pitfalls of sex before marriage and dating in the teen years. The Center runs single-sex weekend retreats and sleep-overs for the teens.

The Oasis Student Ministry at the Metro Detroit Chinese Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Madison Heights, Michigan, is a place where primarily Chinese-American young people come together on Saturday evenings to sing and listen to sermons given by their peers on topics pertinent to their own lives. Afterward, they discuss the message of the sermon in small groups and how it relates to their own lives.



Faith-groups often have a pro-youth attitude and offer youth development programs and activities.

Most faith-based programs for young people concentrate on the strengths of teens, rather than just their problems. They have a positive focus and offer young people opportunities to succeed. Research increasingly suggests that such “youth development” programs can make a difference in preventing teen pregnancy (Kirby, 1998).

For instance, Redemption Ministry in Washington, DC, illustrates how much of an impact youth development programs and activities can have on the lives of youth. Launched by Reverend Anthony Motley and his wife out of their home in 1993, the ministry serves an impoverished community. In the past eight years, 300 young people have participated in the wide variety of activities offered, including mentoring programs, sports teams, classes on dance, drama, and computers, media training, and various afterschool programs. The church is open every day of the week, including evenings, as a safe haven for local teens. Once a month is “Fun Night,” where young people, ages 14-18, participate in an outing to the movies, bowling, roller skating, or some other structured activity. On Saturday nights, the church hosts “Safety Zone,” a program



A highlight from the “Jammin’ Against the Darkness Basketball Tournament” in New York City that a group from Redemption Ministry in Washington, DC, participated in.

that gives teens access to games, videos, and mentoring opportunities. Teens in the athletic program have participated in three-on-three basketball tournaments in New York City and Philadelphia. Since the ministry’s inception, Reverend Motley says he has lost “only one teen to violence, one to the street, and zero to pregnancy.”

Of course, not every congregation can provide the level of youth programming that Redemption Ministry does. The New Creation Christian Church in Baltimore County, Maryland, provides an abstinence-based after-school program called “Y-WAIT” (Youth Winning When Abstinence Is Taught). The program, held once a week in the evening, serves approximately 30 boys and girls, ages 12-17. The abstinence education curriculum is taught to groups of 4-6 students by trained mentors, all of whom are members of the church. The mentors also help the kids with their homework. In addition, the girls have formed a dance troupe and the boys are involved in recreational activities. Although the New Creation Church runs the program, any and all neighborhood teens that are interested in participating are welcome.

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Religious institutions provide teens with spiritual meaning and purpose — and are an appropriate place to put sex into a moral context.

Jennifer Hirsch felt that the young people in her synagogue were disconnected from the meaning of their faith in their everyday lives. She decided that the best way to make religion relevant to teens was to connect it to a topic that *was* on their minds: sex. With the help of parents and educators at the Reform Jewish Temple in Atlanta, Georgia, she developed a curriculum on sexuality and relationships. “Rather than approach sexuality as isolated from broader Jewish values, the course approaches sexuality as a special, sacred extension of all social relationships,” according to Hirsch. The class, which is taught in Sunday morning religious school to a co-ed group, familiarizes the students with traditional Jewish approaches to sexuality issues and teaches how Reform Judaism has developed distinct approaches to such topics as contraception, homosexuality, and abortion.

Some congregations offer programs for both parents and children. In Bentonville, Arkansas, the First Presbyterian Church offers a weekend-long retreat called “God’s Gift of Sexuality” for parents and middle school students to open the lines of communications. Teens learn about the human body, puberty, relationships, intimacy, and the risks



Ricky Irving and Jasontae Bonaparte, the 2000 winners of the essay contest in the “For You I Will” abstinence program in Richmond, Virginia — a.k.a. “the bride and groom.”

and consequences of sex. Bible prayers and litanies are interspersed with physiological facts to help the young people understand sexuality within the context of faith.

Many religious traditions believe that marriage is the only proper context for sexual expression. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, the Salvation Army and the Boys and Girls Club have developed an abstinence-focused program, “For You I Will,” which teaches teens aged 13-17 about the skills required to build a successful marriage. Teens receive instruction in parenting and personal finances,

discuss their relationships with God, and think about their visions for their own families. The program culminates in an essay contest about the importance of abstinence until marriage, and the contest winners become the bride and groom in a full-fledged mock wedding.

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Faith-based programs help parents do a better job of being their own children’s first and best sex educators.

Research confirms the critical role that parents have in their children’s sexual decision-making. In fact, the quality of a child’s relationship with his or her parents is one of the most important influences on sexual decision-making (Miller, 1998). Although teens say they want to hear from their parents about sex, love, and relationships, many parents say that they do not know how to talk with their children about their values in this area. A number of faith-based institutions have stepped in to help parents address these subjects with their teens.

Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Arizona, sponsors an informal parent support program with the tongue-in-cheek name of PANE — “Parents of Adolescents Needing Encouragement.” Led by Reverend Stephen Intagliata, the PANE group meets about every other month to help parents understand their children, the issues that they face, and the culture that they live in. Intagliata has brought in outside speakers to teach ways for parents to talk to their teens about sex.

Other programs for parents are more formal. Worth Waiting For, Inc., a Christian non-profit



Teen participants in “Worth Waiting For” in Cheyenne, Wyoming, talk to middle-school students about the importance of abstinence before marriage.

organization, for example, works to equip parents with the tools necessary to talk to their teens about sex. Worth Waiting For sponsors a program known as the “Local Community Challenge” because they believe it is dangerous and irresponsible to simply come into a community, give a one-time presentation on sexual health, and then leave it up to the parents to do the rest. Worth Waiting For has programs that begin early — reaching out to parents with children in the fifth grade and in some instances younger than that — while other programs address older kids. The point is that these issues are important throughout kids’ lives and that conversations between parents and children should be supported over the long term. They have an eight-hour training program not only for parents but also for grandparents, pastors, youth workers, and teachers so that they can also provide support to young people and to help them understand the pressures that teens face today. The “Local Community Challenge” has taken place in a variety of communities, including Cheyenne, Wyoming, the western suburbs of Chicago, southern New Mexico, and even overseas in Taiwan.

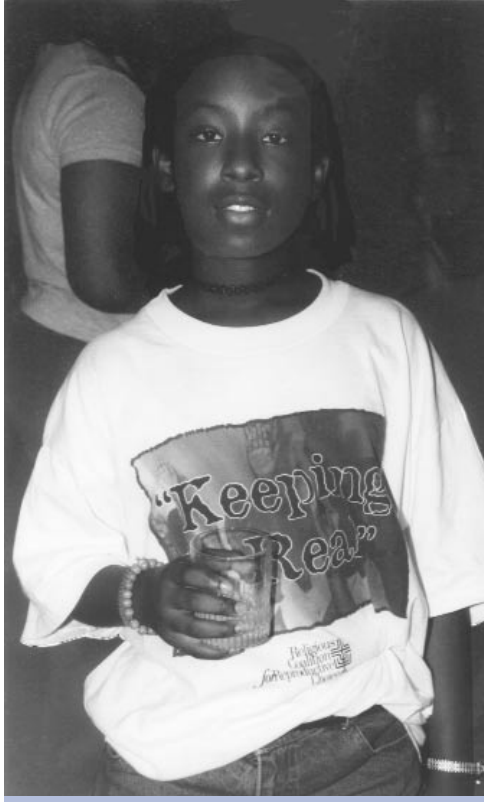
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Some religious groups create faith-based sex and abstinence education curricula that appeal to parents and teens.

A number of national denominations as well as local congregations have developed faith-based sex or abstinence education curricula, which teach about sexuality within the context of faith (see also p. 7). These programs are very diverse, but all emphasize the moral and ethical dimensions of sexual decision-making. For instance, “True Love Waits,” an abstinence curriculum sponsored by Lifeway Christian Resources, encourages teens to take a pledge to abstain from sex until they are married. It explores the spiritual, emotional, and physical value of remaining abstinent until marriage. Since the “True Love Waits” campaign began in 1993, over 1 million teens across the country have signed covenant cards stating:

“Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually abstinent from this day until the day I enter a biblical marriage relationship.”

A recent study suggests that, in some circumstances and settings, teens who sign virginity pledges are more likely to delay sexual initiation than those



A member of the “Keeping it Real” program at the National Black Religious Summit on Sexuality, sponsored by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

who do not (Bearman & Brückner, 2001).

The Unitarian Universalist Association has created a comprehensive sex education curriculum known as OWL — “Our Whole Lives” — for students in grades K-1, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Taught by specially-trained teachers, it offers an orientation for parents, and a signed permission slip is required for participation. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) has designed a curriculum geared specifically for African-American young people called “Keeping It Real,” a seven-week curriculum of facilitated dialogue and activities that addresses sex and sexuality in both a Biblical and secular context. Since 1997, the RCRC has also sponsored the annual National Black Religious Summit on Sexuality, which brings together religious leaders from all over the country to discuss the role of traditionally African-American churches in helping their congregants deal with issues related to sex.



Religious institutions often provide inspiration and opportunities for community service.

Whether by sponsoring a soup kitchen, a clothing drive, or a concert at a nursing home, local congregations offer a variety of activities for teens to feel that they’re giving something back to their communities. Recent research suggests that some programs that include community service opportunities for teens are successful at reducing teen pregnancy rates (Kirby, 2001).

In Connecticut, the Yachad Greater Hartford Community High School offers teens regular opportunities for social service through the “Teens Actively Making Incredible Differences” (TAMID) program. The group meets at least one Sunday a month, and activities include community service days; “Menorahs and More,” which are Chanukah parties for the residents of an independent living facility for the elderly; “Pumpkin Pie Marathons,” where teens bake pies for local shelters for Thanksgiving dinner; and “Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow,” where teens help with a winter party for homeless children.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recognizes the value of faith-sponsored community service through its “Faith In Action” program, which



A member of the Lee Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers in Fort Myers, Florida, helps a resident of Riverside Village make table decorations at Christmas time.

addresses the increasing need for long-term health care. Over its ten-year history, the program has grown rapidly, providing volunteer opportunities in over 1,100 interfaith, volunteer care-giving programs across the country. The Foundation recently committed \$100 million to triple the size of the program over the next six years. Volunteers in these many settings include people of all ages, of all backgrounds, and from all faiths. Although the primary goal of this program is to improve the lives of those needing care, the secondary benefits are equally positive. For example, in Fort Myers, Florida, teens who are members of Lee Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers' "Dream Teams" are reaping the benefits of helping the elderly. Whether they are painting houses, building wheelchair ramps, or simply providing transportation, these young people are learning the importance of giving back in their community and building caring relationships with the elderly as well.



Faith communities reach out to young people outside of their congregations.

Many faith communities extend their ministries beyond their own congregations to welcome young people unaffiliated with any faith group. They offer fellowship, support, and places for teens to feel welcome and to be safe.

A great example is "Bus Stop Ministries" in Portsmouth, Virginia. Each day, Reverend Clifford Barnett of Brighton Rock A.M.E. Zion Church meets with high school students at the bus stop from 6:30 am to 7:30 am to talk about whatever is on their minds. Only two of the regular 25 participants are members of his church. Reverend Barnett also runs "Weights and Wisdom," a program for middle and high school students to lift weights for an hour every afternoon while he talks to them about making good choices, including avoiding teen pregnancy.

There are a number of ways that faith communities can reach out to young people outside of their congregations. Teens always seem to be in search of a place that they can go and be themselves without feeling judged. Reverend Barnett says his job is to simply offer an "open ear and heart." Other religious organizations reach beyond their congregations by offering mentoring or tutoring programs to

neighborhood young people. In Washington, DC, First Rock Baptist Church offers many activities for teens and pre-teens, including rites of passage

programs for boys and girls, afterschool leadership institutes, recreation and sports activities, and once-a-month cultural field trips. Reverend Douglas Norris, a youth minister, started these programs because he found that the top issues for young people in his community are loneliness and anger. He decided to do something about that by reaching out to teens in the area surrounding his church, and not just those who are members of the congregation — two-thirds of the kids involved in First Rock youth programs are *not* members of the church.



Students talk with Reverend Clifford Barnett while waiting for the bus inside Brighton Rock A.M.E. Zion Church in Portsmouth, Virginia.



Faith-based institutions can often pick up where other social institutions have failed.

Faith-based institutions traditionally reach out to those in need, often filling service gaps not addressed by the public sector. In 1995, the Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Denver, Colorado, opened a free clinic to provide primary care for members of the community who were without health insurance. Clínica Tpeyac, which is staffed by voluntary caregivers four days a week, also sponsors two peer education groups — one for adults and one for teens. The teen group, “Nuestros Milagros” (“Our Miracles”), trains teens in grades 8-12 to talk to middle school students about staying abstinent and making other good health decisions.

The Metropolitan Interdenominational Church, in Nashville, Tennessee, established The First Response Center in 1994, a ministry that addresses a variety of issues, including domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS outreach. One of the First Response Center’s programs is “Parents Assisting Children to Achieve” (PACA), which is designed to provide support services to parents who have children experiencing difficulty in the school system. In addition to training parents about how to interact with school officials more effectively and to



Nicolas Casillas, a member of Clínica Tepeyac's "Nuestros Milagros" in Denver, getting a jump start on a high ropes course the group visited to work on team-building skills.

advocate for the needs of their children, the PACA program sponsors workshops on child development issues, such as how to talk to children about sex.



Faith-based initiatives can build community-based coalitions across faiths and between faith groups and secular youth-serving organizations.

Not enough community-based coalitions to prevent teen pregnancy involve religious leaders and faith-based organizations meaningfully in their work. In fact, sometimes faith groups are seen as obstacles to progress rather than as allies. However, secular and religious groups both share a commitment to improving the lives of young people, and several communities have had success bringing both sectors together.

A variety of faith institutions are teaming up with the DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy for the "Have Faith in Youth Initiative," which challenges area houses of worship to open their doors one additional evening a week for teens to have a safe place to hang out. Brenda Miller, Director of the DC Campaign, argues that she sees three types of institutions in her neighborhood when she goes home after work: liquor stores, carry-outs, and churches. Only the first two are open and doing business at that hour. She contends that young people are more likely to get pregnant or cause a pregnancy when they lack safe places to engage in supervised and structured activities.



Brenda Rhodes Miller, Director of the DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, is joined by Rev. Donald Robinson (left), special Assistant to the DC Mayor for Religious Affairs, and Rev. Leon G. Lipscombe, Sr., Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church, at a meeting of local faith leaders in the DC area.

In a number of communities, interfaith initiatives are working together to present information to teens, their parents, and faith leaders about how to prevent teen pregnancy. In Santa Clara County, California, for example, Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and mainline Protestant leaders are planning a community forum, “Sexuality and Faith 101,” to inspire youth ministers to get involved in preventing teen pregnancy, to encourage parents to be involved in their kids’ educations, and to raise awareness about faith-based programs. While the sponsoring groups have different beliefs on sex and sexuality, they have united around the importance of fighting a problem that affects everyone. Similarly, the Maine Interfaith Council for Reproductive Choice, which is made up of a network of Jewish, Christian, and Unitarian Universalist faith leaders recently convened a conference, “When Sex Comes to Church: An Interfaith Forum on Offering Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Congregations,” for clergy, religious educators, and lay leaders.



Conclusion

As these programs demonstrate, many faith leaders and congregations are working hard to help teens avoid too-early pregnancy and parenting. They are united by their commitment to assuring that the young people in their communities grow up to be successful adults with healthy spirits and bodies, yet their methods are as various as are their beliefs. Research and experience have taught us that there is no single best way to prevent teen pregnancy, which suggests that the diversity of our nation — exemplified by the diversity of our belief systems and practices — may be our greatest strength. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy hopes that these examples of promising faith-based efforts inspire religious and secular leaders alike to learn more about the special role that faith communities can play in our common effort to reduce teen pregnancy rates in this nation.

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Keeping It Real

The Religious Coalition for
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1025 Vermont Ave, NW
Suite 1130
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 628-7700
info@rcrc.org

**Maine Interfaith Council on
Reproductive Choice**

Marvin Ellison, Co-Chair
MICRC
P.O. Box 10191
Portland, Maine 04104
www.micrc.org
(207) 797-6386

Oasis Student Ministry

Metro Detroit Chinese Christian
and Missionary Alliance Church
31329 John R.
Madison Heights, MI
(248) 588-0642

Our Whole Lives

Unitarian Universalist Association
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 742-2100
(617) 367-3237 (fax)
info@uua.org
http://www.uua.org/owl/main.html

**Parents of Adolescents Needing
Encouragement**

Rev. Stephen "Tig" Intagliata
Trinity Mennonite church
4334 W. Vista
Glendale, AZ 85301
tig7@juno.com
(623) 931-9241
(623) 912-932 (fax)

Redemption Ministry

Reverend Anthony Motley
3401 4th Street, SE
Washington, DC 20032
(202) 645-3400
innerthoughts@starpower.net

Serve Our Youth Network

Rev. James Koopman
Executive Director
5085 NE 17th Street
Des Moines, IA 50313
(515) 299-1128
(515) 299-1234 (fax)
jimkoopman@mdrc.net
www.serveouryouth.org

True Love Waits

LifeWay Christian Resources of the
Southern Baptist Convention
127 Ninth Ave. North
Nashville, TN 37234
1 (800) LUV-WAIT
truelovewaits@lifeway.com
www.truelovewaits.com

**Worth Waiting For, Inc. —
Local Community Challenge**

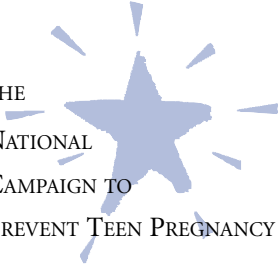
Linda M. Klepacki, RN, BSN, MPH
Director of Ministries
P.O. Box 158
Castle Rock, CO 80104-0158
(303) 814-3944
(303) 814-3945 (fax)
worthwaitingfor@msn.com
www.worthwaitingfor.org

**Yachad — Greater Hartford Jewish
Community High School**

2626 Albany Ave.
West Hartford, CT 06117
(860) 236-5611
(860) 523-9143 (fax)
info@yachad.net
www.yachad.net

Y-WAIT

Robin Boone
New Creation Christian Church
5401 Frankford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21206
(410) 488-5650 phone
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ncccbalto@yahoo.com



THE
NATIONAL
CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization supported almost entirely by private donations. The Campaign's mission is to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families by reducing teen pregnancy. Our goal is to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy by one-third between 1996 and 2005.

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY
1776 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NW
SUITE 200
WASHINGTON, DC 20036
(202) 478-8500
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CAMPAIGN@TEENPREGNANCY.ORG
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