

Teen Pregnancy: A Foster Care Crisis

Sometimes, we take for granted the family that calls us one of their own. If we put ourselves in the shoes of a teenager who is growing up in foster care, then having a family of our own becomes even more important. Not having one's own family may be a major reason teen pregnancy is so prevalent among our nation's youth in foster care.

Research shows that positive communication with parents has a strong influence on healthy sexual decision making by teens. Yet, many foster teens lack a strong, ongoing relationship with a parent or other caring adult. This disconnectedness can lead to risky behavior. One study conducted by the University of Chicago found that nearly **50% of foster teen girls had been pregnant as least once by age 19**. In another study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, **almost half of teens in foster care had sex for the first time before age 16, compared to 30% of their peers**.

An additional factor is the lack of communication on sexuality between foster teen and parent. A foster teen may transfer from one family to the next in a short period of time. These transitions make it difficult to build a caring and trusting relationship. The foster parent may be unable to form a trusting relationship with the teen, let alone discuss things like sex and healthy decision-making. Some foster parents may incorrectly assume that sexuality was discussed in the foster teen's previous home.

Locally, the **Family Life Council is committed to helping foster parents who may be having a tough time finding a way to communicate early and often with their foster children about sexuality**. We offer a Sexplanations program to help begin and strengthen the discussion. In addition, teen pregnancy prevention and teen parenting programs like our Wise Guys Program and Good Beginnings for Teen Parents Program are also available for foster parents looking for additional community resources. By plugging into the strong network of services Children's Home Society of NC and Youth Homes have for foster care providers and families, Family Life Council can connect already successful programs, such as Wise Guys, Sexplanations, and Good Beginnings for Teen Parents, with people who can really benefit.

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of all teens and their families.



Since 1968, the Family Life Council has worked to strengthen families in Guilford County through family life and parent education programs. For every dollar spent on prevention programs, our community saves \$10 on costly intervention programs. For more information about Family Life Council programs go to www.flcgsso.com.

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The Newsletter of **familylife** council

December 2009

From the Desk of the President by Gail M. LeBauer



Some goodbyes are harder than others. This past summer the Family Life Council said goodbye to Cindi Dorman, our Executive Director for over 23 years. While it is hard to imagine our agency without her, we have

much to celebrate because of her amazing legacy of creating and growing programs that strengthen families.

When Cindi began her work with us in 1986, FLC had only three staff, and a budget of \$80,200. Since that time, the staff has grown five times that size, and the budget has increased over tenfold that amount. But that tells only a small part of the story. The heart of Cindi's accomplishments lies in the development of innovative programs that make a difference in the lives of families.

My space here allows for only a few of the highlights. Under Cindi's leadership, FLC:

- began **Good Beginnings for Teen Parents** in 1988. Both that program and its annual scholarship awards are still going strong;
- created **Children of Divorce** in 1990 (the first divorce education program in the Southeast), which has been found so beneficial that Guilford county judges who hear divorce cases involving children now require the parents to attend this program first;
- developed **Wise Guys** in 1990, now a nationally recognized and replicated male responsibility program for teen pregnancy, STI and dating violence prevention;
- launched in 1997 both the first **Marriage Preparation** and **Fatherhood** programs in the state, and in 1999 began **Jóvenes Sabios**, the state's first Latino teen pregnancy program.

With these and so many other efforts, Cindi applied her skills of fund development, evaluation results, and volunteer support to create a broad array of family life education programs that have touched literally tens of thousands of lives over two decades.

As FLC is now poised to begin a new era of even greater outreach and service to families, we are grateful for Cindi's unceasing work in bringing us to this place. And while we will miss her good humor, passion, energy and commitment, we are happy that she can now give more time to family, friends, home and health.

CINDI, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE!!

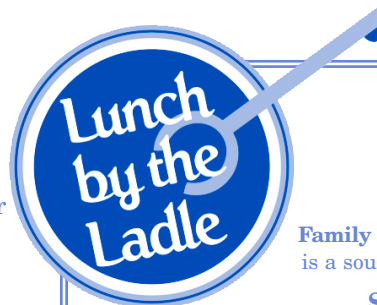
New Opportunities for the Family Life Council

We are excited to announce a new phase for the Family Life Council. Starting in January 2010, we will form a strategic partnership with two highly respected organizations whose missions closely align with ours: Youth Homes, Inc, in Charlotte and the Children's Home Society of NC.

The Family Life Council has been creating innovative programs to help individuals establish and maintain healthy relationships with their families for more than 40 years. Tens of thousands of parents and teens from across Guilford County have attended these programs since 1968. The Family Life Council is a unique organization and we know there are many families outside of Guilford County who can benefit from our programs. The challenge has been figuring out how to grow our programs and still serve the families in Guilford County. By working with these two organizations, we will be able to continue the current successful programs and expand our work in new, exciting directions.

All three organizations see tremendous opportunities to better serve the families of NC by working together. This partnership is not one born of financial necessity or to eliminate duplication of services. The programs and staff for all three complement one another to provide a continuum of services to families. The high quality programs of the Family Life Council that you know will continue in Guilford County. Over the next year, we will also bring programs like Wise Guys, Good Beginnings for Teen Parents, and Parenting Children of Divorce to people in other regions of our state.

Families in our state face numerous challenges and barriers to healthy family relationships. With the Family Life Council, Youth Homes, Inc. and Children's Home Society of NC joining forces, there will be greater opportunities for families to get the support they need.



SAVE THE DATE!

Family Life Council's Lunch by the Ladle is a soup-tasting lunch for the entire family.

**Sunday, April 11, 2010
11:00am - 2:00pm**

Contact: Rebecca Starnes at 336-333-6890 x227

Life Skills for Today's Families

Many Thanks to our Donors

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Good Beginnings for a Better Beginning



My name is **Tara Partin**. I'm 20 years old and have a 3 year old daughter named Dasarah. I was a participant in the Good Beginnings Program during 11th and 12th grade. **The program helped me find support and build self-esteem.** This program gave pregnant teens or parenting teens, like me, a chance to get together in a school setting to talk about difficulties. It allowed parenting teens to network within the school and provided a place with someone who is loving, nurturing, understanding and who listened.

I love the program. I found out about resources in the community like good daycares, doctors, and safe places to take my daughter so we could bond (the library's children's nights, children's museum, and little family events in the community). The counselor made sure I was up to date on my child's shots and check ups and also my own. She would tell me about free clinics where I could check blood pressure and check for breast cancer, STIs, etc.

In the meetings, we would sit down, write down my goals, plans for the week or the month to make sure I was budgeting my time and money. She also made sure I kept up with my classes and that my home life was not hindering me from succeeding in high school. The main goal was graduating from high school and continuing to a college. She made sure I was looking at colleges, applying, making plans to go, and looking for scholarships.

At the age of 17, I became homeless. My mom continued to put us out. I had to find a stable shelter for me and my daughter. I received help from the program. They helped me look for apartments or shelters that would accept a teen mom with no job, a 9 month old child, and not yet finished school. I graduated from high school and now attend North Carolina A&T State University and have held a job for a year and a half. I have a stable home and a reliable car.

If not for this program, I may not have graduated from high school or be in college. This program encouraged me to continue my education. We talked about the factors that could stop me from continuing my education or going to school everyday, and we made plans on how those things were not going to hold us back, me back. I say "us" because **the program was like a family.** If one fell then the family fell. **We encouraged each other; we succeeded together.**

I was happy when I was selected to get the Pratto Family Scholarship. I know that my hard work was for something and not just talk. It was rewarding to receive support to continue my education. Also, I can show my daughter my achievements so that she can grow up and be better than me and not have to go through hardships like I did. The program helped me build a foundation for myself, my family, and my place in society.

When you hear Tara's story, you wonder how you could help, how you can be part of breaking this cycle. Donating to the Pratto Family Life Scholarship program helps break the cycle of teen parents. 99% of the participants did not have a repeat pregnancy and remained in school. Please make a donation to The Family Life Council, and write "Pratto Scholarship" in the memo line to help hard working teens like Tara and her daughter Dasarah have access to a more hopeful future.



For more information about Family Life Council programs or to schedule a program for your organization call 336-333-6890:

Fathers Matter:

Good Beginnings for Teen Parents:

Jóvenes Sabias and Parenting Programs in Spanish:

Jóvenes Sabios – programs for Latino boys and young men:

Marriage Education:

Next Level – health education for adult men:

Education Programs for parents of school aged children and teens:

Parent/Teacher Education Programs focused on birth to age five:

Parenting Children of Divorce:

Sexplanations – how to communicate with a child or teen about sexuality:

Wise Guys:

Wise Guys Mentors:

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