

# BREAKING THE CYCLE

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## Gold Star Gala Raises Over \$33,000 for Breaking the Cycle Programs

*Breaking the Cycle's* first benefit event, "Gold Star Gala – Successes in Teen Pregnancy Prevention," exceeded expectations by raising over \$33,000 and involving the community at many levels.

The event featured a silent auction with over 50 different packages including jewelry, restaurant gift certificates, entertainment and sporting packages; and a live auction conducted by former Hartford mayor Mike Peters. The most



### Gold Star Gala

SUCCESSES IN TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION

popular auction item, a week's accommodation at any of 3000 vacation time-share facilities world-wide and two domestic airline tickets, generated an enthusiastic bidding war and eventually sold for \$2,100. The event also featured presentations by youth participants from *Breaking the Cycle* programs. (See details on youth involvement in the program update section on the reverse side of this newsletter.)

"We are delighted to achieve such excellent results for a first-year event," said Lizabeth Zlatkus, CFO at Hartford Life and board member of the Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health, who headed the event planning committee. "It demonstrates a firm commitment from many area individuals and organizations to Hartford's future," she said. "We could not have achieved this success without the hard work and dedication of our event planning committee members, whose energy and resourcefulness went above and beyond the call of duty," she added. Action Plan board members and staff provided assistance with securing sponsors, ad book sales, donation of auction items, auction logistics and communication materials.

The Hartford was the event's primary sponsor. Other sponsors included: Advest; Day, Berry & Howard; Faith Congregational Church; Helen Frye; Hartford Hospital; Lebon Press; Lee Hecht Harrison; Doug and Mary Russell; St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center and The Travelers. Ramani Ayer, Chairman and CEO of the Hartford, was honorary chair of the event. Many thanks to all who supported this exceptional event. Plans for the 2004 Gala will be announced later this spring. For more information or to get on the mailing list for the next event, contact Laura Stone at (860) 236-4872.

**Above, left:** Ramani Ayer, Chairman and CEO of the Hartford and honorary chair of the event, makes a bid during the silent auction.

**Above, right:** Students from the Teens United in Health project were on hand to talk about their initiatives to improve access to reproductive health services for teens. L to R: Mabel Santiago, grade 12; Eddie Perez, Mayor, City of Hartford; Kritzia Montalvo, grade 12 and Harold Ortiz, grade 10.

**Above:** Attendees preview the silent auction tables. Over 50 exciting packages were available for bidding.

### Coming Soon



Direct involvement of youth in developing *Breaking the Cycle* programs is a long-standing goal of the Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health. In the summer of 2002, we enlisted two high school interns, Jose Figueroa and Cierra Perez, to design a new initiative – a teen pregnancy prevention program that would be run **by teens for teens**.

Action Plan staff members began by giving the interns a basic background in teen pregnancy prevention, and then led them through a formal strategic planning process to design the program.

Starting with the broad goal of preventing teen pregnancy, the youth identified progressively more specific outcome and process objectives. In just four weeks, these two talented teens developed a detailed program outline and marketing plan. They named the program *The Whole Truth*, to emphasize that youth need to get all the facts about sex.

By fall of 2002, the concept for *The Whole Truth* was fully developed, and the Action Plan became a subcontractor to the after-school youth services program at Hartford Public High School, through the 21st Century Schools Initiative.

Health Educator Ezinna Anosike was hired to coordinate the program. Ten Hartford High students have been selected to be Peer Educators. They were trained this winter, and will begin teaching in March 2004. Students at Hartford High will now be able to learn about sex from peers who know the facts.



**Above:** *The Whole Truth* Peer Educators. From L to R: Front row: Cesar Velazquez. Second row: Jasmin Kurtz, Jessipher Figueroa, Miranda Stephenson, Juanita Evans-Thomson, Shaunté Stevens. Back row: Jeanine Hales, Jenelle Howard, Angelica Cortes, Jeanine Howard.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A Matter of Faith ...

*Breaking the Cycle* has identified three neighborhoods in Hartford with the highest incidence of teen births in the Latino community -- Frog Hollow, Barry Square, and Charter Oak/Zion. The committee found that many neighborhood residents are unaware of the very high rates of teen pregnancy and STDs among teens in their neighborhood and in Hartford.



In the Frog Hollow and Barry Square neighborhoods  
120 teens had babies in 2000 -- more than  
one of every ten teens who live in those neighborhoods.

*Breaking the Cycle* has started a new project designed to expand the capacity of neighborhood churches and religious groups in these neighborhoods to address the issues of teen pregnancy prevention among their congregations and provide support for parents on this issue.

Two implementation specialists, Silvia Foote and Eugenio Ayala, have been trained in the *Let's Talk* curriculum and are working to recruit church leaders and elders to take the training. Once trained, church leaders will then have a new capacity to speak with parishioners about teen pregnancy and STD issues and consequences. Their influence will help encourage parents and adults to take the *Let's Talk* training and help make them stronger advocates for the health and safety of their own children.

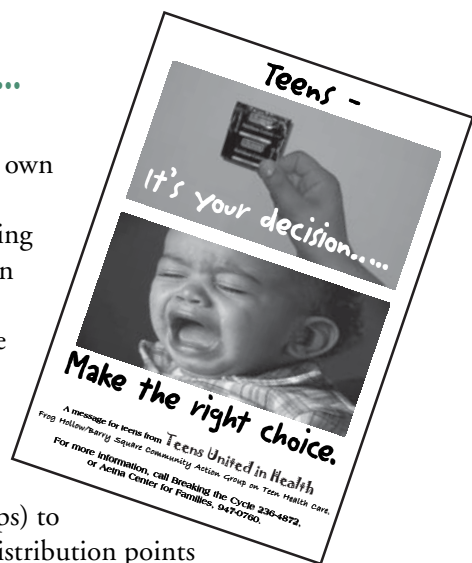
*Breaking the Cycle* plans to work with leaders in at least 20 churches, train 60 church leaders and provide the *Let's Talk* training curriculum to 150 parents through this initiative. In addition, a special event is being planned to bring the faith leaders from the Latino communities in Frog Hollow and Barry Square together to develop a coordinated plan of action.

*Breaking the Cycle* has also developed a Spanish version of our *Progress Report to the Community*. It gives an overview of the issues of teen pregnancy and is appropriate for parents and community leaders. The publication has been distributed to Spanish-speaking organizations in Hartford and through the Hartford Public Schools. It will be updated annually. For more information about teen pregnancy prevention initiatives in the faith and Latino communities, contact Jack Cullin at (860) 236-4872.

Taking Matters into their own Hands ...

A group of very motivated teens have their own ideas about what will work to eliminate teen pregnancy, and they are actively involved in doing something about it. *Teens United in Health*, ten youth from the Frog Hollow and Barry Square neighborhoods, is working to reach teens where they are every day -- around their neighborhoods, at school and over the radio.

*Breaking the Cycle* has helped the group develop partnerships with area businesses that serve teens (such as barber and beauty shops) to



serve as distribution points for health literature and condoms. The group has designed a pregnancy-prevention poster to accompany the materials, drawing attention to the negative consequences of unprotected sex. In an evaluation of the program, shop owners report that the materials are reaching youth, in fact, the demand is exceeding supply.

Another project the group hopes to design is a peer education program for 7th and 8th graders. "The 9th graders we see are clueless, and they are definitely having sex when they're in middle school, because we're seeing pregnant girls in our classes," said one of the group's members who attends Bulkeley High School. *Teens United in Health* envisions a program where they could be trained to go into classrooms or clubs and talk to middle-schoolers. The youth are working with a health educator to develop a pilot curriculum and hope to implement it in the near future. They also want to write some radio public service announcements directed toward teens and partner with a radio station to produce them.



Baskets like these are popping up in businesses that serve teens throughout the Barry Square and Frog Hollow neighborhoods. The project, initiated by the youth advocacy group *Teens United in Health*, has become so popular that restocking the material has become a challenge. If you would like to volunteer to help keep the baskets supplied, contact Maureen Mullen at *Breaking the Cycle*, (860) 236-4872.

*Teens United in Health*, is a collaboration between *Breaking the Cycle* and Aetna Center for Families. For more information, contact Maureen Mullen at (860) 236-4872.

Program Updates

**AOS** Youth from the Always on Saturday program were actively involved in the recent Gold Star Gala, performing a series of role-playing skits that demonstrated condom negotiation skills for older teens. It was an eye-opening session that demonstrated the many issues young people are dealing with as they grow and develop. *Breaking the Cycle* wishes to thank the Artists' Collective for providing rehearsal space for the teens to practice their performances.

**PSI** Welcome to Marty Donovan, new Adolescent Health Leader at Hartford Public High School. Marty is very familiar with the health and sexuality issues facing today's teens, having recently been a long-term substitute Health Educator at Lewis Fox Middle School. She is also a licensed Nurse Practitioner.

Students from the PSI program also participated in the Gold Star Gala, serving as ambassadors and providing information about the PSI program. Students from Bulkeley and Weaver High Schools taught an audience-participatory "lesson" from the PSI curriculum they deliver to Hartford 5th graders. The lesson ended with the audience reciting the PSI motto: "At our age, it's ok to think about sex, it's ok to talk about sex, it's ok to develop feelings and attitudes about sex, but it's NOT ok to have sex!"

Students in the Postponing Sexual Involvement Program at Hartford Public High School participated in the Gold Star Gala by producing display materials about the program and the activities they are involved with throughout the year. "Ask me about PSI" name tags helped generate conversation. L to R: Seniors Karlene Williston, Axeline Maisonet and Leanore McBride.



**LET'S TALK** Parents are often uncomfortable discussing sexuality issues with their children, and the *Let's Talk* program offers free training to help parents get the knowledge and confidence they need to keep the conversations flowing. But what if the parent is also a teen? *Breaking the Cycle*, through our collaborations with organizations who serve teen parents -- such as Family Life Education, APDP, the Village for Families and Children and the Teen Parent Program at Weaver High School -- has come to recognize that the needs of teen parents are different from those of older adults. For example, teen parents really need information about their own sexuality before they can think about their children's positive sexual development. *Breaking the Cycle* is working on a new *Let's Talk* curriculum targeted toward teen parents that will address these issues. *Let's Talk for Young Parents* is planned for roll-out in September 2004, as part of a series of new initiatives funded in the Hartford Public Schools under the Safe Schools/Healthy Children program. The Hartford Public Schools will also be developing a "Parents as Teachers" component that will do outreach to pregnant and parenting teens.

*Let's Talk* has also reached out to serve another population -- mothers who are incarcerated. Since September 2002, 79 Hartford parents have participated in this program, run at York Correctional Institution in cooperation with the Department of Correction. Feedback from the inmates has been extremely positive. Said one participant in a thank-you letter... "It is going to help a lot of families learn a lot of things together."

For more information about the *Let's Talk* program, contact Alice Leibowitz, (860) 236-4872.



Thank you!

Our thanks to the following organizations and individuals who contributed funds or in-kind resources in 2003 to support the work of *Breaking the Cycle*.

- Aetna Foundation
- Asylum Hill Congregational Church
- Board of Directors Hartford Action Plan
- Carse/Robinson Foundation
- CIGNA Foundation
- Connecticut Department of Education
- 21st Century Learning Center Grant Program
- Connecticut Department of Social Services
- Ensworth Charitable Foundation
- Fleet Bank
- Hartford Community Development Block Grant Program
- The Hartford

- Hartford Hospital
- Rocky Hill Congregational Church
- St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center
- Sovereign Bank
- Swindells Foundation
- The Travelers Companies Foundation
- United Technologies
- United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Services, Administration for Children & Families
- Wiremold Foundation
- Samuel Wohl Foundation