

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

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Summary

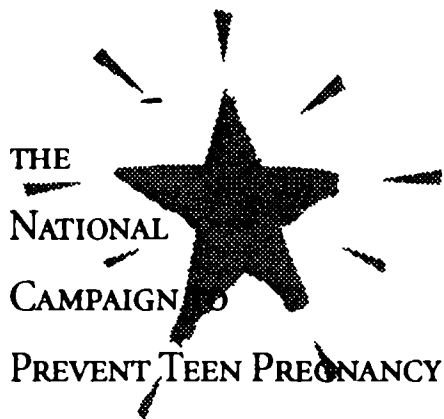
THE
NATIONAL
CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

No Easy Answers

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON PROGRAMS
TO REDUCE TEEN PREGNANCY

Douglas Kirby, Ph.D.

A RESEARCH REVIEW COMMISSIONED BY THE
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN'S TASK FORCE ON
EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH

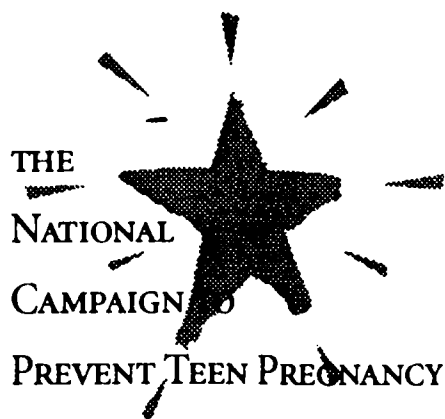


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Snapshots from the Front Line

LESSONS ABOUT TEEN PREGNANCY
PREVENTION FROM STATES AND
COMMUNITIES

A REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY



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MAY 1997

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The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Founded in 1996, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan initiative supported entirely by private donations. The Campaign's mission is to prevent teen pregnancy by supporting values and stimulating actions that are consistent with a pregnancy-free adolescence. The Campaign's goal is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third by the year 2005.

The Campaign's strategy has five primary components: taking a strong stand against teen pregnancy and attracting new and powerful voices to this issue; enlisting the help of the media; supporting and stimulating state and local action; leading a national discussion about the role of religion, culture, and public values in an effort to build common ground; and making sure that everyone's efforts are based on the best facts and research available.

For more information, write to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2100 M Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20037.

Preface

At its founding board meeting in February 1996, the leaders of the new National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy defined "supporting and stimulating state and local action to prevent teen pregnancy" as one of the organization's primary goals. They recognized that the real work of preventing teen pregnancy happens not in Washington, DC, but on the front-line — in states and communities across the nation where many people are working hard to help teens have the best futures possible.

From its inception, the National Campaign was determined to make site visits to communities across the nation both to learn from state and local experts and to catalyze and support their efforts. This report offers snapshots of what the Campaign has learned from visits to Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia over the past year. It is not a comprehensive guide to state and local action, but we believe it offers a sense of the spirit of innovation in communities, as well as of the continued challenges faced by those committed to preventing teen pregnancy.

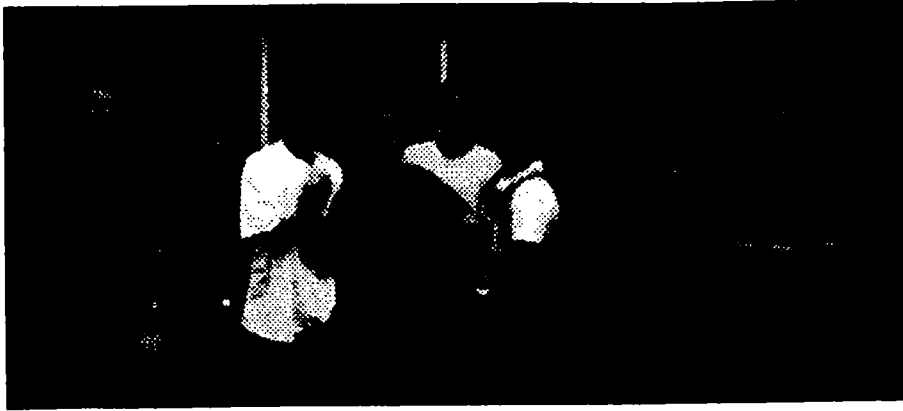
In two and three-day site visits to urban, suburban, and rural communities, Campaign officials and staff met with community leaders,

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Andrew Levack (left), a family life educator in Austin, Texas, and participants in Austin's teen pregnancy prevention program for boys welcomed visitors from the National Campaign.

members of state and local teen pregnancy prevention coalitions, state and local policymakers, service providers, youth workers, and, of course, teens themselves. From prayer breakfasts to teen forums, from community health centers to state- or community-wide meetings, Campaign representatives participated in events that were as diverse as the variety of communities interested in making a difference.

These site visits have been more than just learning opportunities for the Campaign; they have also aided the host communities. In some locales, a visit by the National Campaign helped reenergize participants in a state or local coalition. In one state, the Campaign offered detailed assistance to a team charged with developing a coordinated state plan to prevent teen pregnancy. And often the Campaign has been able to link particular community initiatives to similar efforts in other states.

The National Campaign applauds the efforts of the states and local communities described in this report, as well as similar work happening all over the nation. We look forward to continuing to learn from and support the work of people on the front-lines of the campaign to prevent teen pregnancy.

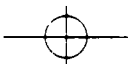
— a teenage boy in Texas

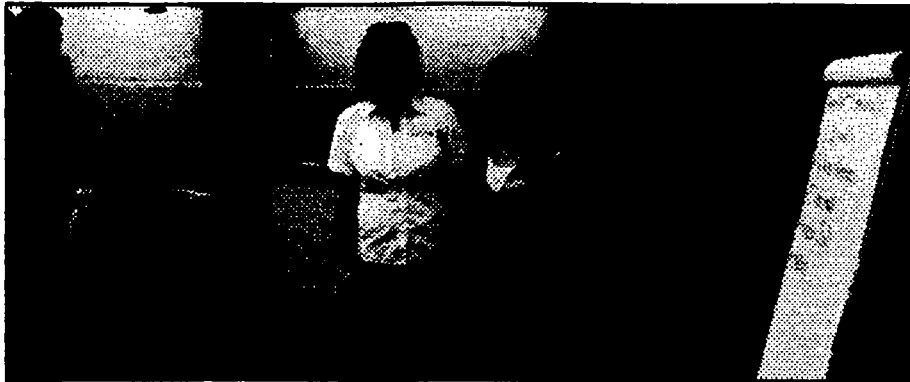
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The Campaign site visits have confirmed that most people recognize the seriousness of the problem of teen pregnancy. However, we've also learned not to overestimate the consensus on this issue. Not all young people — and not even all adults — place a high priority on avoiding or reducing teen pregnancy. In fact, we have met with many groups who feel that more teens get pregnant as a result of their and society's ambivalence about whether teen pregnancy is "OK" than most adults realize. Some teens even seek to become pregnant and have children. This sense was made clear to us when, halfway through a youth forum in Austin, Texas, a young man asked pointedly, "So, what's wrong with teen pregnancy? I don't think it's so bad."

In many communities, a particular strategy about teen sex education and the community's attitude has not made a deep impact. The new way to move forward, says the approach was to "agreeing to disagree."

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Teens conducting a role-playing exercise in Tillamook, Oregon

Real differences in values among adults can impede action to prevent teen pregnancy.

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In many communities, people of good faith disagree strongly about particular strategies to prevent teen pregnancy, especially when values about teen sexuality are at issue. Sometimes these conflicts stymie a community's ability to do anything at all. Tillamook County, Oregon, made a deep impression on the Campaign because it was able to find a way to move forward in the face of value conflicts. The essence of their approach was to take action in an atmosphere of tolerance, with all sides "agreeing to disagree."

When in 1990 state data showed that this rural county of 23,000 citizens had one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state, the county health department proposed creating a school-based clinic that would provide contraception, provoking intense community conflict. The proposal was defeated by the school board, but the community agreed that something had to be done. They decided the only consensus they needed was that the teen pregnancy rate must drop. Various segments of the community developed intensive initiatives — ranging from creating new church-based abstinence education programs, to improving access to family planning clinics, to expanding YMCA programs for girls — and agreed not to fight each other's efforts. By 1994, the county teen pregnancy rate had dropped by 70 percent, becoming the lowest in the state.

No 3

Many communities are moving away from brief, one-dimensional prevention programs in favor of adopting intensive prevention strategies that have many components.

Motivated by high rates of repeat teen pregnancies, community leaders in the upstate New York town of Cortland formed the Zero Adolescent Pregnancy (ZAP) coalition in 1991 to put in place a diverse set of activities, including:

- Training teens to be peer educators in schools and the community.
- Offering parent training classes to increase their knowledge and communication skills.
- Training clergy and religious education leaders to provide sexuality education in their faith communities.
- Encouraging all youth to postpone sexual intercourse.
- Providing teachers with graduate training in such abstinence-based curricula as "Postponing Sexual Involvement."
- Providing free-of-charge birth control services to high school-aged teens who are sexually active.
- Working with the media to create community awareness and enlisting teens to create, film, and edit public service announcements to be shown in the schools and on local TV.
- Publishing a quarterly newsletter.

After a few years of these efforts, Cortland's teen pregnancy rate had dropped by 25 percent to the county's lowest level in 20 years. Research supports the idea that such complex programs offer real promise for preventing teen pregnancy (Kirby, 1997). Because teen pregnancy is caused by many factors, from poverty to teens' feelings of inadequacy, from a lack of caring adults to a change in social norms, prevention programs must employ many approaches simultaneously. Moreover, leaders in every state and community we visited said preventing teen pregnancy means giving teens reasons not to become pregnant or cause a pregnancy. A youth worker in Chicago said, "We're trying to make pregnancy only one of 15 attractive options, rather than one of two." Her program focuses on jobs, education, career planning, and self-development.

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"We're trying to make pregnancy only one of 15 attractive options, rather than one of two."

— a youth worker in Chicago

Two teen participants at a New
Beginnings Leadership
Workshop, Virginia



Many local groups working to reduce teen pregnancy seek the meaningful involvement of young people in program planning and development.

The Richmond, Virginia, Community Collaborative for Youth considers teens as equal partners. Teens serve as full members of the steering committee, and a youth development committee trains youths to participate as decision makers.

In Cortland, teens are involved with designing programs and services. For instance, when the community recently opened a teen clinic, teens advised that information about clinic services on posters had to be visible from a distance so that teens could see it without obviously (and embarrassingly) looking at it.

In New Jersey, *SEX, etc.*, a newsletter written for teens, by teens, reaches 60,000 New Jersey high school students. Funded by foundation grants and overseen by the Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers, teen reporters have covered such topics as "Let's Wait Awhile: This Teen Couple Saves Sex for Marriage," "Straight Skinny from the Opposite Sex," and "Doing Drugs: Not All It's Cracked Up to Be."



Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber
pre-ty National Campaign
President Isabel Sawhill

Baltimore's Ad
speaks to a p
in Arch

Nº5 Involving powerful state and local leaders can make a real difference. Whether in the state house or local church, key leaders can be especially successful at bringing in new people and funds. They increase the public visibility of promising programs and can encourage community involvement.

In 1995 the Richmond (Virginia) City Council and the city's new assistant manager jointly established teen pregnancy prevention as a primary goal. Together they developed public-private partnerships, increased city funding for prevention programs, and expanded a family life education program.

Oregon has had long-standing commitment from public officials to preventing teen pregnancy. The 1991 "Oregon Benchmarks" identified teen pregnancy as a major indicator of quality of life. In 1994, Governor Barbara Roberts identified teenage pregnancy as her top priority issue. Current Governor John Kitzhaber and his wife, Sharon Kitzhaber, who met with Campaign leaders to exchange ideas about promising prevention strategies, have begun a statewide effort to stimulate state and local initiatives to reduce teen pregnancy, targeting teens aged 10 to 17.

In Arkansas, several state legislators have joined together to introduce legislation creating an ambitious statewide initiative to reduce teen pregnancy. Campaign staff encouraged such efforts at meetings with the Governor, the Lt. Governor, and other state leaders, including state Senator Jay Bradford, a member of the Campaigns State and Local Action Task Force.

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Baltimore's Adambush lectures
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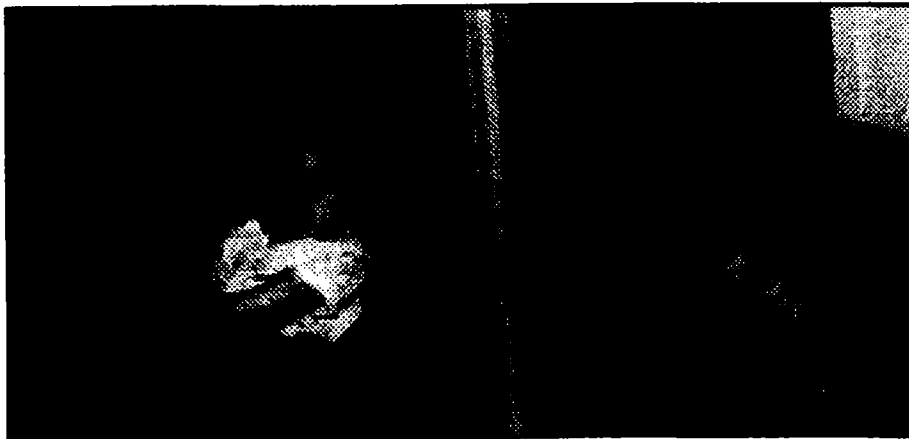
Involving boys and men in prevention efforts is critical. In the past two years, new initiatives have surfaced around the country to focus prevention efforts on adolescent boys that involve adult men as leaders and role models.

At Inwood House in New York City, "not-yet fathers" are deterred from unprotected sex by learning of the struggles faced by young men participating in the Young Fathers Program. Boys aged 9-10 hear a strong message from the young fathers about delaying fatherhood — that teen years are for learning and having fun rather than struggling to provide for children.

In Austin, Texas, a three-year federal grant helped the state health department place special emphasis on male involvement in teen pregnancy prevention, and a broad public/private coalition on male involvement was developed. The state, which is sponsoring a fourth statewide male involvement conference this year, has been successful in including "unlikely partners" — like law enforcement officers — in prevention efforts focused on boys and men.

A Newark, New Jersey, prevention program for young fathers and not-yet fathers seeks to expand life options for at-risk young men by increasing their employment opportunities through counseling, education, and job referrals.

Male involvement initiatives should not be just program add-ons but must be integrated into every aspect of teen pregnancy prevention. The National Campaign is publishing a report in mid-1997 on ways to involve boys and men in these efforts, based upon a roundtable meeting co-sponsored by the Campaign and the Family Impact Seminar.



National Campaign Director Sarah Brown (left) visits Arkansas

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Caring and focused attention from adults — as parents, friends, mentors, and leaders — can have a transforming effect on teens.

Communities everywhere are worried about who is minding the six- to eighteen-year-olds when they are not in school. In a society in which parents in both single- and two-parent families must work, kids of all ages are often unsupervised during afternoon and evening hours. We know that kids who have access to afterschool activities that involve close relationships with caring adults are less likely to be involved in risky behaviors. The Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health has had a state bill introduced to create a task force that will collect information on the status of recreational activities for children and teens.

In Texas, the East Austin Youth Charter works with neighborhood groups — churches, schools, businesses, and other youth-serving organizations — to promote adult involvement with teens, including youth employment and enrichment activities during non-school hours.

In Arkansas, abstinence educators view their work as a character-building movement in which the values of self-respect, self-control, and personal responsibility are modeled and shared by adults with teens who then act as role models for their peers — creating a cascading effect of adult caring.

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***"While adults are arguing,
kids are getting pregnant."***

***— a national teen pregnancy
prevention leader***

States are seeking to harness the power of the media to reduce teen pregnancy, often through public service announcements.

N98

States and communities that have developed media initiatives have learned to follow several important steps: determine the goal, identify target audiences, conduct research on the targeted audiences (using pollsters and focus groups), and include teens in the message development process. National Campaign staff participated in a day-long retreat sponsored by the Oregon Department of Human Resources. Participants reviewed videos from several states and discussed focus groups and message development with a pollster who will help develop messages and design an overall plan for outreach.

The Network For Family Life Education in New Jersey learned a valuable lesson about the importance of teen involvement in planning media campaigns in the mid-1980s when they undertook a statewide campaign geared to teen pregnancy prevention, which attracted nearly one million dollars in free space on billboards, kiosks, and buses. Once the posters were out, Project Director Susan Wilson was summoned to Plainfield High School by angry teens who wanted to express how insulted they were by them. They were adamant that teens must be involved in creating media messages in order for them to be acceptable and effective.

These experiences and others have given the National Campaign a strong sense of the value — and limitations — of media campaigns focused on teen pregnancy prevention. In June 1997, the Campaign is hosting a conference to help states learn from the experiences of others how to develop media campaigns that focus on prevention. The key theme of the meeting will reflect another lesson from the field — that a media campaign should be only one part of a more comprehensive prevention plan that includes community action and local services as well.



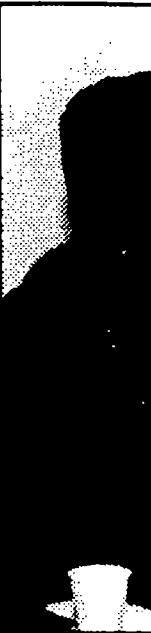
In Cortland, NY (from left to right), Andrea Ranking, director of the Jacobs Center for Reproductive Health, spearheads the ZAP Coalition; ZAPella, the teen pregnancy prevention superhero; Gabby Laplante, a ZAP peer educator; and the National Campaign's Tamara Keating.

Nº9

It is easy to start a coalition to prevent teen pregnancy; the challenge is to sustain it.

In 1995, after four years of steadily decreasing teen pregnancy rates, Tillamook, Oregon, saw the rates starting to creep back up, which reminded the community of the necessity of continued vigilance in prevention efforts. And in Cortland, New York, coalition leaders confronted a paradox: their very success in reducing teen pregnancy rates by 25 percent over several years made maintaining the momentum of the initiative difficult. Because the county's teen pregnancy rate dropped so precipitously, Cortland became ineligible for state prevention funds. The coalition soon understood the need to create new gimmicks and strategies to keep people interested. For instance, a local teen peer educator created ZAPella, a female "superhero" who talks to kids about self-esteem and self-respect at schools, community events, and churches. While these efforts have helped reduce the teen pregnancy rates in Cortland, community leaders acknowledge that maintaining the energy necessary to keep all these activities going is difficult. With constant turnover in the teen population — a new group enters adolescence every year — findings ways to sustain commitment is essential.

Well-organized communities often find assistance from outside valuable in reenergizing their coalitions and programs. People have told us that sometimes even a simple visit from the National Campaign can be a boost for burned-out community workers and volunteers.

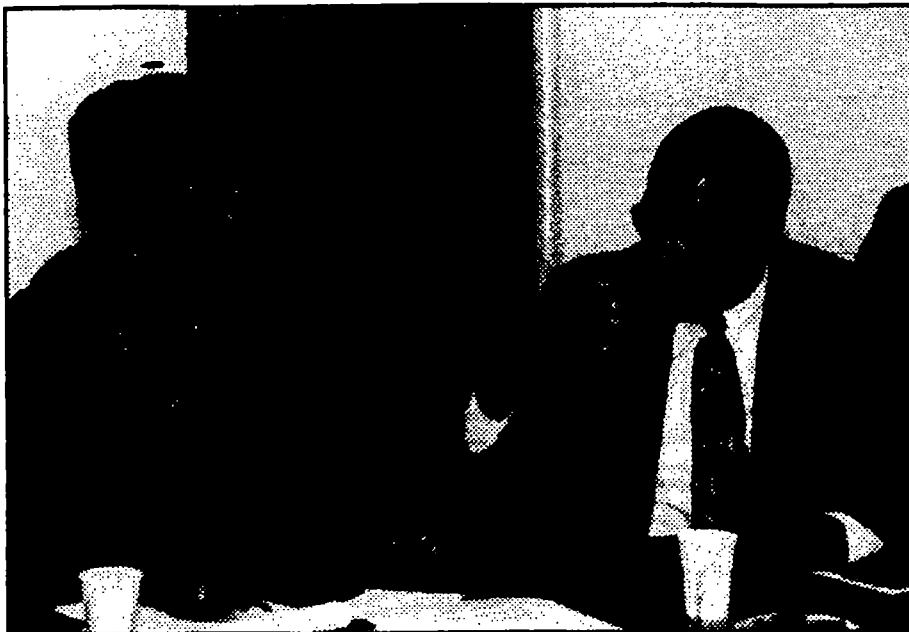


The National Campaign

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The National Campaign's Phyllis Klein with Robert Johnson, MD, at a school-based youth services program at Plainfield high school in Plainfield, New Jersey.

State and local leaders are eager to know "what works" in teen pregnancy prevention..

NO 10

The Campaign has been struck by the growing understanding throughout the nation that preventing teen pregnancy requires more than simple messages like "just say no" or "use a condom." States and communities are full of creative people coming up with innovative strategies to help teens avoid pregnancy. These same people are looking for better information on what has worked elsewhere.

The Campaign is committed to helping communities do the very best job possible — to learn from others and, particularly, to understand what research can teach about effective approaches to prevention. Toward that end, the Campaign's recent report, *No Easy Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*, summarizes an enormous amount of information about how to help and what to do next. Two versions of this report are available from the Campaign: a brief summary and the full review.

Conclusion

The National Campaign will continue to travel to communities across the nation — to learn, to help where we can, and to celebrate the hard work being done to prevent teen pregnancy. As we learn of specific needs in states and communities, the Campaign acts to meet them where possible. In early 1997, for example, the Campaign developed a well-regarded Welfare Reform Resource Packet to help states and communities implement the teen pregnancy provisions of the recent federal welfare legislation. We also developed a list of ideas for celebrating May as Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. And, in response to great demand, the Campaign will host a training meeting on developing state-based media campaigns this summer.

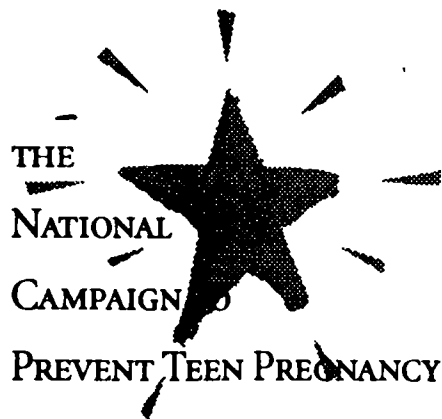
In a similar spirit, the Campaign's Task Force on State and Local Action is currently cataloguing state and community efforts in a more orderly way and is gathering information on resources available to states and communities from national organizations. We will release this information in the coming year.

We remain committed to visiting the front line — it's always a rich experience, always worth the effort, and it always infuses the National Campaign with new energy.

Reference

Kirby, D. (1997). *No Easy Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Back Inside



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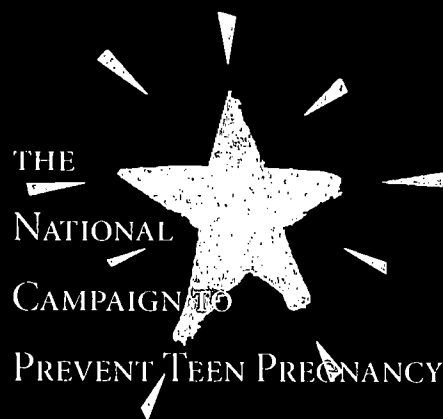
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