

Risk Avoidance Education for Iowa's Youth

June/July 2018

Dear Partners,

The above is the title of our project for the school year 2018-19.

Our goal is to provide the hopeful message of Risk Avoidance (abstinence) to many more of the youth in our Cedar Rapids communities and beyond. For this project we need your continued help. We are seeking to employ several full-time educators and to identify many more partners like you who have a passion for our vulnerable teens and unborn children. Informing our community at large of the added benefits Powerful Choices lessons can offer may help schools move forward with more support from their parents and community members.

The time is crucial for our youth! We thank you for your support. With this greater initiative we are asking you to join us by prayerfully considering assisting us to increase our number of partners. We invite you to co-host with us an intimate coffee for you and your like-minded friends at our office. Together we can share with them Equipping Youth's mission. Give us a call to set a date and time including evenings if your day time is filled. As partners, would you also prayerfully consider what you may do to help us increase our budget to include two full time salaries?

The difference in SRR and SRA education The need for adolescents in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa area to receive Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) health education such as Powerful Choices continues to increase since 2010. Since that year the turn over in our schools brought many new teachers and administrative staff who had never experienced the positive results of Powerful Choices curriculum. Their new curriculum was mostly Sexual Risk Reduction (SRR) education stressing safer sex by using birth control.

Proof of the consequences of failed SRR education in our communities' schools is evidenced by the severely increased teen birth rates and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) cases among our adolescents. The most recent live birth statistics for youth 15 to 19 in Linn County is 41.2 per 1000 in 2016, compared to 8.7 per 1000 in 2010.¹ The reported number of cases of gonorrhea increased by 145 % from 2013 to 2017 according to the Iowa Department of Public Health; and that 50% of these cases were among youth aged 15 - 24 years. This increase in the number of cases of reportable STDs is frightening. While the Iowa Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed only 32% of youth aged 15-19 years indicated that they had ever experienced sexual intercourse this small population of sexually active youth evidently suffer from multiple cases of STDs each year.

Our SRA education, Powerful Choices, teaches primary prevention. Powerful Choices lessons share the hopes and benefits of waiting until marriage, making wise choices concerning friendships, positive group dynamics, personal health habits, character development, avoiding violence, consequences of negative habit-forming activities, how to deal with past and present childhood negative episodes, and making future educational and life goals. We continue updating PC lessons to include the latest Iowa Department of Education Health Standards.

The Staff and Board of Equipping Youth appreciate your investment in the lives of our youth.

May God bless you and yours!

Ruth Anne Eccles, Executive Director

¹ Vital statistics of Iowa, Linn County, 2016