



The Connection

NEWSLETTER FROM TEEN PARENT CONNECTION

UPCOMING EVENTS

- April is Child Abuse Prevention Month
RAISE AWARENESS. SPREAD THE WORD.
- Vine
Friday, April 10th
Danada House
- 3rd Annual DuPage Human Race Saturday, April 25th
Esplanade at Locust Point
- The National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
Wednesday, May 6th
Event details to come!

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- Holiday Drive Thank You: Matheison, Moyski & Austin LLP, Wheaton Bank & Trust, & Community Supporters

Free mental health services address the unique needs of our young families

At Teen Parent Connection, we believe that long-term social and emotional support can change a young parent's life. That's why our programs are designed to serve families for up to five years - from start to finish. By investing our time in these families and listening to their stories, we learn so much about the unique challenges they face on a daily basis. We also begin to recognize when participants need additional support through our Individual, Couple, and Family Counseling Program.

Any parent could tell you that raising a child can feel overwhelming. However, many teen parents lack the information, support, and resources necessary to overcome their unique challenges of parenting, leaving them especially vulnerable to stress. Without a strong support network, young parents and their children face higher risks for depression and anxiety. Without support the consequences of these stressors can lead to increased risk of child abuse, neglect and family violence.

Now in its 5th year, TPC's Counseling Program works to connect participant families who are struggling to the



professional guidance they need to help them successfully navigate these challenges. Young families can meet their counselor on a weekly basis at their own home or the TPC office, whichever they prefer. Like all other services we provide, counseling is delivered to participants free of charge.

Because of the strength of our relationships with the families we serve, we have been very successful in helping them engage in this deeper level of service. Last year, 24 families received counseling services through TPC. New grant funding will allow us to not only expand these services for parents but will also provide additional level of training for staff.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Ariana Carlson, Parent Group Coordinator



Teen Parent Connection Young Parent Support Groups allow adolescent parents to find commonality, strength, and encouragement to help them meet the demands of parenthood. Leading this effort is **Parent Group Coordinator Ariana Carlson**.

Ariana developed a strong sense of devotion for the nonprofit sector while volunteering during high school. The experience working on prevention programming for middle and high school students gave her a deep appreciation for nonprofits working

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Peer Prevention Program: Promoting Community Health

Each year nearly 500 babies are born to teenage mothers in DuPage County. Teen Parent Connection's Peer Prevention program works throughout our community delivering abstinence-based pregnancy prevention programs to middle and high school students. Our goal is to educate students on the realities and responsibilities of adolescent parenthood and reduce the number of births to teens.

Delivered to nearly 14,000 students last school year, this program empowers middle and high school students with the education they need to make informed decisions about their sexual health. Trained Health and Peer Educators shared this message with 47 DuPage County and surrounding area schools last year.

Elizabeth Witman, Program Manager and former TPC participant, is a qualified health educator who engages students in educational activities focused on the prevention of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and HIV/AIDS. "As a former teen parent and current prevention program supervisor, I believe that giving teens knowledge of the realities of teenage pregnancy, and information and skills to prevent it, enables them to make healthy and informed decisions," Elizabeth reflects. Christine Wulbecker, Bi-lingual Community Engagement Coordinator provides additional help leading a portion of the health presentations. Our abstinence-based health education provides students with medically accurate and consistent messaging.

Our prevention program is powerful because we feature a Peer Educator in partnership with Elizabeth and Christine. Peer Educators are young parents and TPC participants who are trained to share their unique story reflecting the health, social, emotional, and financial consequences they have personally experienced since becoming a teen parent. Monique is one of the many trained Peer Educators who shares her journey as a young parent with students.

Monique became pregnant when she was 18 years old and just starting college. Her dreams of a typical college career full of campus life and friends quickly changed. Today, she shares her story of becoming a young mom to son Jayden in the hopes that her challenges will inspire students to make informed decisions that will not lead them to young parenthood.

Students who participated in the Peer Prevention Program are listening, and last program year reported the following:



Staff Christine, Monique & Elizabeth

After this presentation, I feel:

"100 times more educated on teen births and how much it affects people's lives." (Male, 16)

"That being a teen mom is a lot more difficult than portrayed on "Teen Mom" (Male, 15)

Because of this presentation I plan to:

"Stay abstinent, finish high school and college, get a job, and then think about starting a family." (Female, 15)

"Stay the way I am now and set boundaries in my relationship." (Female, 15)

"Not be sexually active until I am emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually, and financially ready to endure the possible consequences of an unplanned pregnancy." (Female, 15)

For information on teen health, teen pregnancy prevention, and abstinence or to schedule Teen Parent Connection's Prevention Program, please contact Elizabeth Witman at elizabethw@teenparentconnection.org, 630-790-4530, ext. 232.

DONATE

A donation of \$10 ensures that a student will hear our prevention message. Contact Sarah Pluth at 630.790.8433 ext. 232 to support our prevention efforts. Thank you DuPage Medical Group Charitable Fund for your investment in our Prevention Program.

SAVE THE DATE!



FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2015

6:30 - 9:30 PM • DANADA HOUSE IN WHEATON

TICKETS: \$85 EACH

VINE brings together the culinary delights of My Chef Catering with delicious sips from local wineries and breweries. Join us as we honor our participants while celebrating the work and mission of our organization!

Proceeds from VINE benefit the programs and services of Teen Parent Connection.

FEATURING



Event Planning Committee Volunteers Needed! Join an energetic group of volunteers and help plan a successful event. For more information or to sponsor our event, contact Sarah Pluth at 630.790.8433 x232.



Ariana Carlson *Continued from cover*

to improve the lives of youth. Ariana's passion for social work inspired her to pursue a Bachelor Degree and then a Master of Social Work Degree from Aurora University with a concentration in school social work.

Ariana offers a wealth of knowledge and experience in the human services field as a staff member and Parent Group Coordinator of our Young Parent Support Groups. Young Parenting Groups are hosted at eighteen sites throughout DuPage County, and cover a variety of topics including health, relationships, and workforce development. Ariana reflects, "The most rewarding aspect of my position is seeing the impact that group has for the young families we work with. Many of the young parents identify group as their only source of genuine support and social connection." Ariana applies her experience in facilitating parent groups, leading parent education, and providing one-to-one support to families as well as supervising a team of Parent Group Facilitators.

TPC staff and board thanks Ariana for her dedication and work empowering young parents to reach their fullest potential!

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Visit our website: teenparentconnection.org

Community partners help assure that every child we serve experiences the kindness of the holidays

Mathieson, Moyski, Austin & Co., LLP, Certified Public Accountants & Advisors, once again joined forces with Wheaton Bank & Trust in hosting their Annual Holiday Gift Drive benefiting our Holiday Program. This holiday gift drive helped collect hundreds of items that were distributed to Teen Parent Connection families during the month of December. Becky Beilfuss, Executive Director: “The response from the community was so wonderful. These holiday donations helped assure that the young families in our programs had wonderful toys and books under the tree – as well as warm

clothes, coats and hats.” Thank you Mathieson, Moyski, Austin & Co., LLP and Wheaton



Bank & Trust for helping to assure that every child we serve has an opportunity to experience the warmth and kindness of the holidays.

The Holiday Program served over 100 families and was generously stocked with donations from the following donors:



- AMERICAN LEGION ROSELLE
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Join Teen Parent Connection’s Human Race Team, a 5k Run/Fitness Walk hosted by Giving DuPage.

When? Saturday, April 25, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.

Where? The Esplanade at Locust Point, Downers Grove

Visit DuPageHumanRace.org today to support our team by walking, running or donating!