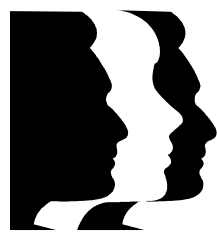
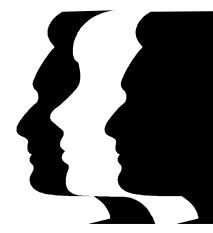


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The Pregnant and the Pressured

In 2007 pregnancy rates rose 3% after a 14 year decline in numbers across the United States.

by Jamie Ramirez

Adolescent pregnancy is nothing new and has been with us since almost the beginning of time. In our modern world, however, there is more focus on letting children be children and there is tremendous

pressure on keeping them safe from adult situations until the parents feel that they are truly ready for those experiences.

Statistics show that adolescent pregnancy is associated with a whole variety of factors including, cultural, economic, social, and psy-

chological influences, which could include things such as school environment and sexual abuse. All situations are different and there isn't necessarily just one reason why it happens; it can be a mixture of many different factors.

During his term as Presi-

dent, George W. Bush had attempted to pump millions of dollars into 'abstinence only' education programs. These programs teach young people how the only real safety there is from getting pregnant and getting an STD (sexually transmitted disease) is to abstain from sex. Reported in an article written by Deborah Kotz for U.S. News and World Report, Bush asked for more than \$100 million in funds for abstinence only programs.

However, "several states opted to turn down federal funds rather than be forced to forgo contraception education in public schools." In 2007, about \$6 million went to The Department of Health and several community based organizations in Tennessee.

Once in office, President Obama eliminated funding for abstinence only education. The concerns about these programs were that students are being taught only about abstinence and there is no comprehensive education on reproduction,

anatomy, psychological implications and various other factors. According to Kotz, "Experts fear that an anti-birth control message could turn kids off of ever using contraception, even as adults. Federal law mandated that to receive funding, programs must teach that abstinence is the 'only certain way' to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Some educators have taken this to mean that they should focus exclusively on the limitations of birth control;" however often they don't work. This article states that a 2004 congressional report showed that "over two thirds of the programs provide inaccurate information about contraception and abortion risks."

The National Coalition to Support Sexuality Education outlines Tennessee's sexual education laws and policies. It states that Tennessee Code "forbids the teaching of any sexuality education class unless it has been approved by the state

board of education and the local school board, and is taught by instructors deemed to be qualified by the local school board." Courses in sexuality education must also include presentations encouraging abstinence during teen and pre-teen years. "Violation of this rule is considered a Class C misdemeanor." Sexuality educators are also protected under this code.

Many have felt that this is not the way to take care of the problem and that the money being spent on these programs would be better suited to other programs that teach sex education, disease education and relationship counseling.

While some feel that abstinence only programs will not, cannot and do not work, One Life One Choice states that pregnancy rates have actually declined in Bradley County as a result of these programs.

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The People Going Paperless

August will be the last month you will be able to read *The People News* in its newsprint form. You can still pick it up at the beginning of each month as you have been accustomed to doing, but now it will only be available online at www.thepeoplenews.com.

Those who already read the electronic version know that their favorite news, articles and editorials are conveniently available with a few clicks of the mouse. It will no longer be necessary to search town for your paper copy and it will no longer be necessary to dis-

pose of leftover newspaper. The website is easy to use and it is still free. Also, there will be no hidden spyware or annoying pop-ups associated with the website. It will be clean and user friendly, just like the original.

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