



How to Play Cupid

by Terry Miller Shannon

You know the perfect person for your good friend, and you're dying to set them up. Maybe both of them really love comic books or Wyclef, are great artists, or have the same silly sense of humor. "If it works out, they'll both feel happy — as well as grateful to you," says Carol Weston, author of *Girltalk* and *For Girls Only*. However, matchmaking can sometimes be tricky. "Pushing people together is a terrible idea, and trying to talk one friend into caring about another can backfire for all," says Weston.

That's exactly what happened to Buck when he set up two of his friends. "I thought Monica and Janelle [names changed] would be perfect for each other," he says. Monica fell hard for Janelle, but unfortunately, Janelle wasn't ready for a serious relationship. "Janelle liked Monica as a friend and didn't want to hurt her — but eventually, she had to," explains Buck. The matchmaking experience was messy and painful for everyone involved.

Matchmaking 101

Are you thinking of setting up two of your friends?

Before you make a matchmaking move, improve your chances of success by asking yourself the following questions about your friends:

1. Are they available? Tara's friends set her up with a nice guy. The only problem was Tara was still hoping to get back with her ex-boyfriend. Needless to say, the matchmaking attempt just didn't work out.

2. Do they want to get matched up? As Buck found out, it's important for both friends to be on the same page about what kind of relationship they want. If one friend is looking for someone to date casually (like Janelle) and the other friend is looking for a serious, long-term girlfriend (like Monica), things can get awkward and people's feelings can get hurt.

3. Do they match? Although sometimes opposites do attract, it's helpful for people to have compatible personalities. Someone who's shy and into quiet conversations, for example, may have a hard time hitting it off with a super-outgoing, life-of-the-party type. Common interests are also key — it can give your friends something to talk about or do together when they're first getting to know each other.

When it comes to your motivation for matchmaking, consider the following:

1. Are you doing this for the right reasons? No fair setting up your buddies just because you're in the mood to double-date. Another no-no: you secretly lust for the person you're hooking your friend up with. Your goal should be making your buddies happy ... right?

2. Are you communicating? Tell your friends a little bit about each other before they meet up. Clue them in on what they've got in common, so they'll have some good conversation starters.

3. Are you being honest? Tell the truth about the people you're setting up. Avoid getting carried away with your enthusiasm and "overselling" your friends — it can lead to disappointment.

4. Are you letting go? Once you've gotten your friends together initially, it's time to let the relationship run its own course. Don't carry messages back and forth between your friends, push for a second date, or take sides in disagreements.

Finally, don't get over-invested in your matchmaking endeavor. If the relationship doesn't work out, don't take it personally. You can help kick-start a relationship, but it's up to your friends to keep it running smoothly.

Sexuality and relationship info you can trust from Planned Parenthood® Federation of America

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TATF CHAPTERS:

Knowledge is
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Group Home
Canastota
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Hamilton
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ONEIDA
Boys & Girls Club
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New Horizons
Proctor
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Corcoran
East Syracuse-Minoa
Fowler
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Jamesville-Dewitt
Nottingham
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Westhill

OSWEGO
Altmar-Parish-
Williamstown

Farewell

Hi everyone,

As many of you already know, I will be leaving my position here at AIDS Community Resources, Inc. as of February 28th. Although I am excited to be moving forward with another phase of my life, I find myself looking back at my time here working with all of you, and thinking about all the "times".

I remember trying so hard to stay awake during the lock-in in Utica, running back and forth during the overnight at Clifton-Fine School, all the frozen toes (and fingers, and ears) during the First Frost Walks, having to call AAA to get them to unlock my car to get the keys out of the trunk that one of my kids put in there. Hoping that Canton would get there without running out of gas (again).

I have been through laughing fits, tearful goodbyes, and getting phone calls at home with questions and crises and wondering if I was going to make it through working with such energetic and CRAZY kids. And I loved every minute of it!

I want to thank you all for the time you spent out of your after-school time listening to me yammer on about STD's, HIV, alcohol dangers, and teen pregnancy. I hope in all of those TATF meetings and popcorn popping that you learned at least a

little something from me.

I know that I will look back and miss you; I wish you all the best that life can bring. PLEASE make good decisions, ask for help when you need it, offer part of yourselves and you will get it back 100 fold. That is what I have learned from all of you.

I will send you all an email now and again to let you know how school is going. Please let me know if something good happens to you, or if you need help with anything at all. Thanks for the memories.

Sarah



Is this craze that everyone is talking about sexually suggestive and sinful or is it an innocent dance move?

“Grinding”, the dance step or move has gotten a lot of attention lately from school administrators and parents. The distinctive dance move has become this generation’s equivalent of the Charleston or the Twist. Grinding simulates the sexuality this generation has attached itself to, and has attracted much scrutiny. At times to the point where some of our schools have cancelled dances for no other reason than that students will be grinding on the dance floor.

However I do have two questions: “Why single out just one behavior for scrutiny?” If grinding is sexually suggestive to the point that it must be banned, how is it that we are allowing our young girls to wear revealing “night” clothes to school? How suggestive is that? Everywhere I turn I am looking at young girls in their skimpy outfits. There was a time when a respectable young lady would rather be caught dead than to have a young man see her in something that is to be worn only in the bedroom.

I think we are sending our children mixed messages about what is appropriate and what isn’t. Personally I believe that instilling a sense of propriety and charity starts at home. Meaning that if we as parents strive to instill some level of discretion and pride in our children and allow them the opportunity to

have open and objective conversations with us, then than we would and should be in a better position to trust them when they are away from us.

I do think that some dancing is sexually overt and should not be allowed in public places. At a minimum, grinding is in bad taste. Parents, schools and other caretakers of our children should monitor it very closely. In addition, other behaviors that are sexually explicit should be considered of equally bad taste.

Let’s ask ourselves this?

1. Are we (the parents) planting the seeds that encourage this is sexually suggestive behavior?
2. Are we allowing children to express themselves while guiding them along the way?
3. Are we dictators who strip our children of freedom of expression because we feel we have the final say so?

*Karen Loftin, TATF
Coordinator*



The "War" Here at Home

By Steve Cardona, TATF Coordinator
and United States Army veteran

The war in Iraq has taken its toll not just in society but moreover, with our adolescents. Many of our Teen AIDS Task Force members are feeling the affects of this war.

For example, many teens' spiritual, physical, mental, moral and social development has become more open to questioning. Since several parents are presently away from home our young adolescents do not know if they will ever see their mothers or fathers return home. Many of these children are asking that we bring home their parents before there are no more parents left to return.

Nowadays, it shouldn't hurt to be a child. Many of these children come from one-parent homes, and if something happens to their parents they ask "who will take care of me?" and "how do I prepare for life without my parents?" I have seen many of the children's

demeanor change; for example, several adolescents have expressed their willingness to engage in "Risky Behaviors".

That is why I believe my job and the TATF is very important. I have seen both ends of the spectrum, going to war and leaving my loved ones behind. I have seen how my children have changed upon my return back home. There are no programs to help these young warriors to deal and cope with their present situations. For now all we can do is educate and try to put these young people back on track.



Oriskany TATF Teams Up With SADD

Oriskany High School held a dance to support these two great groups who represent one great cause; raising awareness of healthy decisions amongst their peers.

This dance was supported by Reality Check and was DJ'd by the local radio station 97.9 KISS FM. Approximately 150 students attended the dance despite the cold and snowy weather.

Both groups know how important it is

to make good decisions because in a blink of an eye, your life can be changed and turned around, whether it is jumping in a car with someone who has had too many beers or you yourself having too many beers or having unprotected sex even one time. Both decisions can ultimately end your life. Both groups try to make their peers aware of these consequences and stress making good decisions.

Chittenango TATF

The Chittenango TATF peer educators decided to trade positions with the health teacher for a day to talk about a subject that often people feel uncomfortable talking about; HIV and AIDS. The group taught a total of 4 classes throughout the school day.

The TATF members gave an overview of how HIV is transmitted and cleared up the common myths that teens have. They also let their peers know that HIV/AIDS is a huge issue in the teen population, every hour in the US, 2 young people between the ages of 13-24 are infected. They also warned their peers to watch the decisions they make especially with alcohol and drugs because they can have a huge impact on their decision-making.

The peer educators also had some creative group activities that caught the attention of their

peers. They demonstrated how quickly HIV/AIDS can be spread without people even knowing. They also demonstrated how much a person's daily life is changed by this disease by giving them a handful of M&M's and telling them that they represented all the medications an HIV positive person would have to take to stay healthy.



Offering Yourself – A Volunteer's Tale

Remembering when my adopted mother found out that she was in fact positive for HIV, ACR helped my family out through a lot. The number one thing I remember was a volunteer and a case manager dropping off Christmas presents to us the day before Christmas. Knowing that someone was there for my family and I in time of need truly inspired me. So, for myself, I do volunteer work for two reasons. First, I want to give back to the community which has given to me. Secondly, keeping myself constantly busy keeps me away from influences that might not be the best for me at this time in my life.

Mary Doody, Director of Volunteer Services at ACR, explained to me the importance of volunteers. AIDS Community Resources was founded by volunteers, and if it wasn't for volunteers constant support, ACR would not be where they are today. "A lot of tasks volunteers help with on a daily basis, could not be done with staff alone." Mary says. "If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes an army of volunteers to keep our programs running." In the last sixteen years of being with ACR Mary has heard a gamut of reasons why people volunteer, all ranging

from; they were infected or affected with HIV and wish to help, personal development, social justice, and to just stay active in the community.

Volunteering means a lot to those whom you work with, but it means more to those who you have helped through your efforts. And if ever you think by just helping once you're not doing any justice, remember if it wasn't for volunteers in 1983, and all those who have followed them, ACR would not be where it is today. So please, if not for yourself, for those around you, volunteer somewhere and help make your community a better place.

*James, ACR
Volunteer*



The HPV Vaccine: A Sexual Health Breakthrough

by Amy Levine

HPV — the human papilloma virus — is a very common sexually transmitted infection that affects millions of women and men around the world. Most types of genital HPV cause no symptoms. A few types cause genital warts, which may be uncomfortable and unattractive, but are not dangerous. A few other types of genital HPV, however, can lead to cancer of the cervix, anus, penis, vagina, and vulva.

Fortunately, two drug companies are developing vaccines that protect against the types of HPV that most commonly produce symptoms — a development that could save hundreds of thousands of lives.

But there's a catch and a controversy: The vaccine should be given to girls and boys before sexual activity with partners begins — as early as 10 to 12 years of age. While most people agree that vaccinating young people against HPV is an important step in protecting them against cancer, some are opposing the vaccine, claiming that it would give young people "permission" to have sex.

The Lowdown on HPV and Cancer

HPV is spread through skin-to-skin contact. There are more than 100 types of HPV, and about 40 of these types affect the genitals and reproductive organs. About 20 million people in the United States are currently infected with genital HPV. In fact, it's so common that about three-quarters of sexually active women and men have genital HPV infection at some point in their lives.

Some types of genital HPV cause genital warts, which can be annoying, but are harmless. And while most HPV infections resolve of themselves, a few types of HPV, if they persist, can cause cell changes that can lead to cancer of the cervix, anus, penis, vagina, and vulva. Worldwide, cervical cancer alone strikes half a million women and claims 270,000 lives each year, making it the second-leading cancer killer among women, after breast cancer. (Fewer women die of cervical cancer in the U.S. than in other parts of the world because they are more likely to rely on Pap tests for early detection of precancerous conditions.)

The Vaccine

In a major sexual health breakthrough, the drug company GlaxoSmithKline has developed a vaccine that is nearly 100 percent effective against HPV 16 and 18, the two types of HPV that account for 70 percent of cervical cancers. Another drug company, Merck, has created a vaccine that protects against these two types of HPV, and well as two types of HPV that cause genital warts.

Before the vaccines can be made available for use, they must be approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). GlaxoSmithKline hopes that the FDA approves their plan to vaccinate girls starting at age 10. Merck hopes to influence state legislatures to require all 12-year-old children to be vaccinated before they can go to school.

The Controversy

Despite the fact that HPV vaccines have the potential to save many lives, some groups — including the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family — have come out in opposition to them, saying that vaccinating young people against HPV could encourage them to become sexually active. That's like saying that putting seat belts in cars encourages people to drive recklessly! And recent surveys have shown that most parents agree — they're in favor of the HPV vaccine and would have their children vaccinated.

"Children get a lot of vaccines when they are young, including hepatitis B, which can also be sexually transmitted," says Gary L., a father from Indianapolis, IN. "I don't see the HPV vaccine as being any different. I think it's careless not to protect my kids if there's an option available."

The reality is that many teens are sexually active, and it doesn't make sense to put their health in jeopardy by withholding the vaccine for "moral" reasons. "Young people need to have their health protected, regardless if they are sexually active now or not," said Jean L., a mother from Rockaway, NJ. "Infections like HPV, which can lead to cancer, should not be seen as a punishment [for sexual activity]."

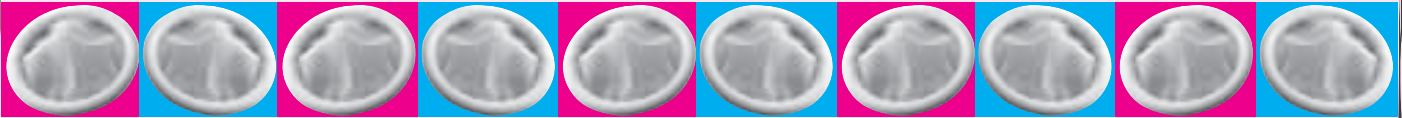
Stand Up for Your Sexual Health

If you want to make your voice heard on this issue, there's a lot you can do to educate and influence people on local, state, and national levels. Here are a few suggestions to get started:

- Create a list of messages that you want to express, and share them — with your family, friends, teachers, mentors, and neighbors — during casual conversation. You can start the dialogue by saying, "I just read an article about HPV vaccines. What do you think about that issue?" Then tell them what you learned and your points of view.
- Contact your local newspaper, radio, and television networks. Send them a letter or e-mail sharing your perspective as a teen, and help raise awareness in your community about HPV vaccines.
- Take action by sending a letter or e-mail to elected officials voicing your support for HPV vaccines. Visit the Planned Parenthood Action Network to find out the contact information for your local, state, and federal officials.

Getting an HPV vaccine approved and vaccinating young people is the surest way to protect against HPV and prevent cervical and genital cancers. But it's definitely going to take some time for that to happen. Until then, people who are sexually active can reduce their risk of getting HPV by using condoms every time they have sex. In addition, women who are sexually active can protect themselves against cervical cancer by getting regular Pap tests. For more information, check out HPV, Pap Tests, and Cervical Cancer — Questions & Answers.

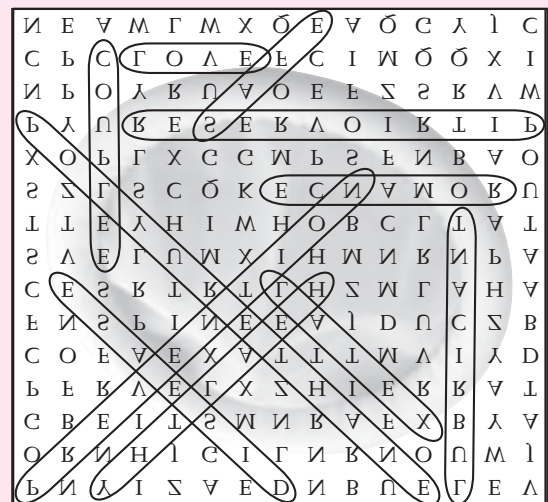
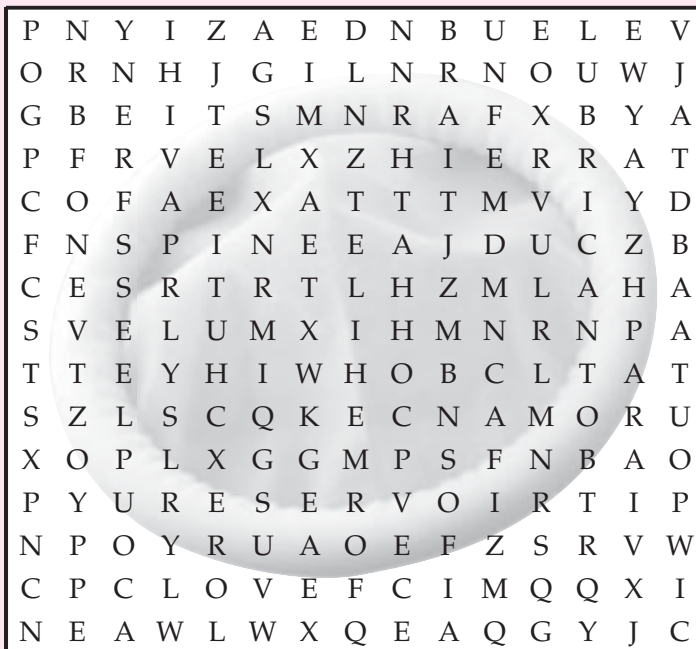
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NATIONAL Condom DAY FEBRUARY 14

In the United States February 14 has long been celebrated as our National Love Day. Did you know it is also National Condom Day? So, since we at AIDS Community Resources,

Inc. want you to love and protect yourself, we created this puzzle to remind you all of some important things associated with a condom.



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DISEASE
HEALTHY
LATEX
LOVE
LUBRICANT

POLYURETHANE
PREVENTION
RESERVOIR
TIP
ROMANCE
SAFE





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A Multicultural AIDS Service Agency

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Teen AIDS Task Force is all about being involved: whether it be spreading the word amongst your peers or just educating yourself: there's a lot going on to be involved with!

What do you think?

We would like to know what you think. What are your opinions about the articles in the TATF newsletter? Give us your feedback. Are the articles grabbing your interest and the interest of your peers? We would like to make the newsletter more interactive for you so let us know how we are doing.

April 14, 2007

Bowl-a-thon at Bowl Mor Lanes to benefit the LGBTQ Youth Center @ ACR. Call 475-2430 for information or to register.

April 29, 2007

8th Annual AIDS Hike for Life – a 5K fundraising walk at Hamilton College. www.AIDSwalkcny.com

June 3, 2007

15th Annual AIDS Walk/Run - A 5K fundraising walk, 10K run at Beaver Lake Nature Center. www.AIDSwalkcny.com

Peer / Volunteer Orientation

Orientation sessions for new peers and volunteers are held twice monthly in both Syracuse and Utica.

In Syracuse, call 475-2430. To sign up in Utica, call 793-0661

Support Groups

Treatment Adherence

Contact Karen Anne at 475-2430 ext. 410

Syracuse Youth Group Meetings:

LGBTQ (ages 13-18): Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Transgender (ages 14-24): 1st & 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Steppin' Out (ages 19-22): Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

For location and further information:

lgbtqyouthcenter@aidscommunityresources.com

Utica Youth Group:

Sundays from 4 p.m.- 6 p.m.

For locations and further information, contact Mary Doody at (800-475-2430)