

TATF

TEEN AIDS TASK FORCE

SEPTEMBER 2008

Welcome Back!

Hope you had a great summer. We've been busy planning for another great year and can't wait to see you all!

If you're not already a TATF member, here are 10 reasons you should be:

1. Globally there are over 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS
2. 42% of new HIV infections worldwide occur in youth ages 15-24
3. New York State ranks #1 in the number of HIV/AIDS cases
4. 1 in 4 sexually active youth ages 15-24 in the U.S. gets an STD every year
5. A person with an STD is 2 to 5 times more likely to get HIV by having sex
6. 43% of U.S. teens report ongoing alcohol use
7. 1 in 5 young people report having unprotected sex under the influence of alcohol
8. In NY state, 52% of HIV+ people were infected through sexual contact
9. 47% of all U.S. high school students have reported having sex
10. HIV is 100% preventable—Knowledge is Power

**Still not convinced you should join?
Check out some of what we did last year...**



**KNOWLEDGE IS
POWER...
GET SOME!**

TATF CHAPTERS:

HERKIMER

POLAND

JEFFERSON

CARTHAGE

INDIAN RIVER

W.A.G.Y.

WATERTOWN

WATERTOWN TEEN CENTER

MADISON

BERKSHIRE FARM MADISON

GROUP HOME

CANASTOTA

CHITTENANGO

HAMILTON

MORRISVILLE-EATON

ONEIDA

ONEIDA

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

CAMDEN

ORISKANY

NEW HORIZONS

PROCTOR

TABERG RESIDENTIAL

CENTER

WHITESBORO

YWCA/GIRLS, INC.

ONONDAGA

CORCORAN

FOWLER

HENNINGER

JAMESVILLE-DEWITT

NOTTINGHAM

WESTHILL

ST. LAWRENCE

CLIFTON-FINE

CANTON

COLTON-PIERREPONT

YOUTH SERVICES

TATF...

Knowledge, Support...Your Future

Hello again to all of those TATFers from last year who are returning and welcome to those of you who are new. That's me, Angela Foster, TATF coordinator for St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties. For me, the North Country is a unique blending of cultures and personalities that makes education at any level challenging, but worth every bit of the heart and soul you pour into it. I cover 10 chapter in 2 counties and each and every one of them has its own personality, creativity, and energy level. My hope for you in the new year is this: If you were active last year, I hope that you push yourself to come up with new and different ways to get your job done (partly because that makes mine easier – I won't lie!). If you are a new chapter, or even a new member, I hope that you take the time, and have the drive to get to know both me personally and the TATF program well enough to learn that it is a safe place. One where you can be yourself and excel like you do no where else in life. If we learn one thing from each other that we didn't know before the year started, then not only are you doing your job, but I am doing mine as well. Just keep in mind that knowledge is like anything else in life – it always means more if instead of keeping it all to yourself, you choose to share it with someone

you care about. In the North Country the informal motto has become "Reach one! Teach one!" Take what you learn this year and always remember it, but don't forget to pass it on as well! I'd also like to send out a HUGE heart felt Thank You to all of the advisors who volunteer their time and work with me to keep the North country chapters up and running – I couldn't do it without you!



Angela Foster

Pleased to meet ya...



Nicole Skinner

Hello, my name is Nicole Skinner and I'm the new Teen AIDS Task Force Coordinator for the Mohawk Valley. I graduated from Utica College in May 2007 with a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts and Elementary Education. I am also the proud mother of my eight year old daughter, and we live in Frank-

fort. I am very excited to join the TATF team, and can't wait to get started meeting all the great young people we serve. I came to AIDS Community Resources as a Community Follow Up Worker, and gained lots of valuable experience working with people and families infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. When the opportunity came to get involved with TATF, I jumped at the chance. The messages of prevention and self-awareness are so critical in our communities today, I strive to share them with the young people around me. This year I am looking forward to getting the safety and prevention messages out to the young people in the local high schools, especially right here in Utica. I also would like to see the community based groups grow and evolve to really have a positive impact on the neighborhoods they represent.

It is our mission to educate young people and then send them into the world as informed leaders.



Leean Stack & Nicole Skinner



Jana Gaeta

Hello, my name is Jana Gaeta and I'm the new Teen AIDS Task Force Coordinator for the Syracuse Area. I was born in the Czech Republic where

I permanently lived for the majority of my life. Starting as a teenager until 2006 I traveled all over the world and explored different countries and cultures. Soon after my first trip to the United States in 2001, I decided to start my masters program at the University of West Bohemia and evaluate my life experience. To keep myself active and busy I picked two majors - English and Physical Education. My first job was a teaching position. English as a Foreign Language was something I have always wanted to teach because I believed I had a lot I could offer. While still finishing my degree at my university and teaching, I was leaving the Czech Republic for summers to obtain more experience. Two years ago I met my husband in the Washington D.C. area and after getting married in the Czech Republic, we decided move to the United States for good. So here I am! Working for AIDS Community Resources and enjoying a very similar position to teaching with something very important in addition - helping people and society to fight against a problem that affects all of us with no exceptions. I feel honored and privileged to be part of such a great team that AIDS Community Resources has built over 25 years. I am ready to start working with schools, communities and everybody who wants to join me to make our world better and safer.

Kate Brand, President of the Canton TATF Chapter, accepted 40 blankets and 20 baby hats from Ms. Coleen Rose on behalf of the St. Lawrence County Chapter of Binky Patrol. Binky Patrol got its start in California and is an organization that donates hand made blankets and afghans to those in need. St. Lawrence County's Chapter is 100 members strong and has donated in the past to the following organizations: CAVA, Renewal House, Public Health, SLC Foster Care, and victims of fire or illness. All blankets go to children under the age of 18 who have any traumatic or debilitating life event occur. Members volunteer their time to create beautiful works of art that are meant to be a physical source of comfort in a time when it is desperately needed. Ms. Rose has been involved with Binky Patrol for 11 years and says they are always in need of more members willing to donate their time and talents as well as donation of yarn and quilting supplies. If you would like to become involved please contact her at 244-0607.



**Canton TATF
receives
40 Blankets from
St. Lawrence County
Binky Patrol**



Kate Brand and Colleen Rose display one of the many donated blankets.

Canton TATF president, Kate Brand, and all the "warm fuzzies" provided by the Binky Patrol!

THIS IS NOT A TEST!

Missy Elliott Tells Teens to Break the Cycle of Violence

By Anna Bialek, 16, Staff Writer
Originally Published: Apr 24, 2004
Revised: Oct 11, 2006

Hip-hop star Missy Elliott is the new spokesperson for Break the Cycle, the national organization that works to prevent domestic and dating violence through education, free legal services, advocacy, and support for young people. As spokesperson, she gives Break the Cycle an exceptional donation, but her commitment is not purely financial.

Elliott, who grew up with domestic violence, says her new role fulfills a personal dream to help teens understand and prevent violence in their relationships. Sex, Etc. spoke with Missy Elliott about her own experiences with domestic violence and commitment to educating young people about dating and domestic violence.

Sex, Etc.: You mentioned in the campaign press release, "I know how domestic violence can affect a family, and I want to do everything I can to stop it from happening to others." Have you been a victim of domestic violence?

Missy Elliott: My mother was abused by my father until I was 13 years old. At the time, I didn't know what I could do or who I could turn to. Even though both my parents loved me, it was an unhealthy situation. I promised myself that if I ever had the chance to speak out and reach people, I'd help get the word out about domestic violence and let people know that help is available.

Sex, Etc.: How do you feel dating violence affects today's society, particularly teens?

Missy Elliott: Dating violence is a huge problem in America—people might not realize that one in three teens experiences some kind of abuse in a romantic relationship. Teens really need to be educated about dating violence and domestic violence and the law, so they can have healthy and safe relationships.

Sex, Etc.: Were you educated about these issues when you were a teen?

Missy Elliott: No. When I was in school, they didn't talk about teens experiencing dating or domestic violence. It's

a problem, because kids might not realize they're in an unhealthy relationship—they might not see the warning signs early on. That's why I think Break the Cycle's work is so important. They go into schools and teach kids about domestic violence and the law—and they let them know that help is available.

Sex, Etc.: So, do you think high schools need to do more to educate teens about violence in relationships?

Missy Elliott: Yes. We have to give teens important health information, like the warning signs of abuse, so they can make good choices for themselves. We can only stop domestic violence if we reach kids early and teach them about healthy relationships. We need to make sure they understand the issue, so that they don't end up on either side of an abusive relationship.

Sex, Etc.: How can teens get more involved in this issue?

Missy Elliott: They can educate themselves about domestic violence and keep their eyes open to what's going on around them. If they have friends who are in unhealthy relationships, they should encourage them to get help. If they want to get more involved with the issue, they can volunteer with domestic violence organizations where they live.

Sex, Etc.: Do you have any other advice for teens?

Missy Elliott: Everybody deserves a healthy relationship. If you're being abused, don't be afraid to tell someone you trust and get help.



Photo by Warwick Saint

United States needs a Lesson in Sex Ed



By Mark Bartkiewicz, I8, Staff Writer
Originally Published: Apr 1, 2004
Revised: Jan 26, 2007

Teens in the United States get pregnant, have abortions, and contract sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) at rates ranging from three to 74 times higher than teens in the Netherlands, France, and Germany.

The U.S. teen abortion rate, for example, is at least three times higher compared to these European countries, while the teen gonorrhea rate is more than 74 times higher than in the Netherlands and France, according to Advocates for Youth, a national organization that advances teen rights.

Rule of Respect

Why the drastic difference? There are a lot of reasons. In the Netherlands, France, and Germany, adults treat teenagers with respect. They view them as contributing members of society, not problems to be solved.

Each of these European countries has an unwritten social contract with teenagers: "We'll respect your right to act responsibly, giving you the tools you need to avoid unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV," according to Advocates for Youth.

Just Say No

Do you feel treated that way? My guess is, no. Instead, U.S. adults hammer us with the message that we have to wait until we're married to have

sex. They often make us feel guilty if we choose to have sex, even if we act responsibly. And that, ironically, makes us less likely to take steps to protect ourselves.

Many conservative politicians impose their own moral and religious beliefs on us, trying to force schools to teach abstinence-only sex education.

For some, abstinence might be the right choice. But it's not the right decision for everyone. That's why U.S. teenagers deserve the same comprehensive sexual education our European peers receive.

Double-Dutch

Another reason for Europe's lower teen pregnancy rates is the acceptance and availability of contraception. Teenage girls in Germany and the Netherlands use more oral contraceptives than U.S. girls.

"First, European teens are provided with national health insurance, which is universal and covers the cost," said Barbara Huberman, director of education and outreach at Advocates for Youth.

"Secondly, young women are taught in school how to use the Pill. Last, but not least, instead of being taught to say 'no' to sex, women are supported in their prevention of unplanned pregnancy."

In Europe, teen contraception is so accepted that a commonly-used term is "double-dutch,"

which is when the guy wears a condom and the girl is on the Pill, says Huberman. This has contributed to the lower rates of teen pregnancies, abortions, and STDs.

The European focus, Huberman says, is on empowering young people to make an informed decision on whether they want to become sexually active. If they decide to, then they know it is expected they will always use protection against pregnancy and STDs.

The U.S. media are also to blame. Teenagers receive a lot of information—or misinformation—about sexuality from television, movies, and the Internet.

A popular teen show might depict a teen couple having casual sex, making it look like fun, but ignoring the possible consequences. Some teens feel pressure to copy what they see, as if this is the “norm.”

One strategy would be for the government to launch a widespread, long-term media campaign to educate teenagers about protecting themselves against unplanned pregnancy and STDs.

Huberman says that the three European countries’ governments support “massive, consistent, long-term public education campaigns.”

The U.S. campaign could reinforce the idea that abstaining from sex is a good choice for many, but also advance the belief that teenagers have a duty—and a right—to protect themselves, should they decide to become sexually active.

MTV’s Fight for Your Rights: Protect Yourself campaign is one of the few programs that provide honest information about sex to teens. But not all U.S. teens have access to MTV and the network only spends a limited amount of time on such programming.

U.S. policy-makers should re-evaluate the abstinence-only approach and realize it’s time to provide quality, government-supported sexuality education. Research has shown that this approach works best.

“Research and science should guide policy, not individual or religious belief,” Huberman says.

It is also absolutely crucial for our society to become more comfortable with sexuality. In the European countries mentioned, Huberman says, media campaigns are “far more direct and humorous than in the U.S. and focus on safety and pleasure.”

Take Action

What can you do about this? Get involved. Become an activist. If you attend a school with sex ed that is “too little, too late,” demand your right to complete information and access to health services. If you want to change sex ed at your school, check out our Roadmap: A Teen Guide to Changing Your School’s Sex Ed.

Small changes are happening. For example, the California Legislature recently approved a bill mandating comprehensive sexual education in the classroom. But much more needs to be done. You can help.

Huberman recommends logging onto the organization’s Web site and joining a youth activist network, or becoming outspoken in your own service and community organizations.

Get active. Our future depends on it.

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Kate Brand, Canton TATF President, co-facilitated the Peer Educator Training with her chapter Coordinator, Angela Foster, in Watertown this summer. Having been through the training already, Kate decided to take on a bigger role this time by presenting the information about Sexually Transmitted diseases and Peer Leadership skills.



ACR offers its services to anyone without discrimination based on age, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, political affiliation, marital status, handicapped status, or mode of transmission.

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Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 9, 2008
LGBTQ Starbucks Mixer

When: September 9th
from 6 – 8pm

Where: Starbucks in
Watertown, 1242 Arsenal
Street, P&C Plaza next to the
Holiday Inn Express

OCTOBER 15, 2008
**National Latino
HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**

OCTOBER 19, 2008
First Frost AIDS Walk
When: October 19 at 1pm
Where: Thompson Park
Zoo, Watertown

NOVEMBER 3, 2008
Holiday Angel Drive Begins

DECEMBER 1, 2008
World AIDS Day

DECEMBER 2, 2008
Holiday Angel Drop-off



Support Groups

SYRACUSE YOUTH GROUP MEETINGS:

LGBTQ (ages 13-18): Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30
Transgender (ages 14-24): Wednesdays, 5:30-7:00
Steppin' Out (ages 19-22): Thursdays, 7:00-9:00
For location and further information:
qcenter@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 or
gbltqyouth@aidscommunityresources.com.

