

Abstinence Program Reduces Premarital Sex By 72%

Issue:

Did you ever wonder what it is like to be the parent of a pregnant teenager? Did you ever wonder what it is like to see your teenager give her newborn baby away for adoption?

He is almost 9 now. The last time I held him he was but two days old, moments before my daughter gave him away. I saw him once when he was about three. I haven't seen him since.

My story doesn't begin nor end there. It began about 5 years before he was born when I thought I was doing the right things. I encouraged conversation and answered the questions. My younger daughter understood how babies are made.

I treated her like an adult. I told her not to have sex, but, if she did, then use a condom. "Protect yourself," I said. She listened. When she was a junior in high school, she told me she was pregnant. She cried. She told me they used a condom. I cried.

I have few regrets in life. However, watching my daughter endure her pregnancy, and, then, the ordeal of adoption are the ones I wish I could change now, no matter the cost.

I wish I had told her don't have sex. Period. I wish I had told her that marriage is the only place for sex. I wish I had told her those were my expectations, but I didn't.

Scenarios like this happen all too often in South Carolina. Each year there are about 5,000 births to unmarried teenagers. Each year there are countless numbers of teenagers and parents who weep because they know their lives will never be the same.

Intervention:

Heritage Community Services developed 'The Heritage Method®' to increase the numbers of adolescents refraining from non-marital sexual activity. The Heritage Method®:

- Complies with the US Congress' definition of abstinence education, as well as the South Carolina Comprehensive Health Education Act;
- Has two school-based components (*Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education I & II* and *Heritage Keepers Life Skills Education, Levels I – V*) and four community-based components (*Parent, Faith, Media and Family Assets and Character Councils*);
- Serves high schools, middle schools, and the communities around the schools; and
- Reaches adolescents and the adults who influence them.

Impact:

- The Heritage Method® reaches more than 20,000 teens yearly in South Carolina, Georgia, Maine, Rhode Island, Kentucky, and the Caribbean with the message that marriage is the best place for sex.
- In 2002, the Institute for Research & Evaluation compared Heritage's students to similar non-program students a year after program completion. They found The Heritage Method® reduced the proportion of program adolescents initiating sex by 41% among those receiving the program for the first time and 72% among those receiving the program a second time.
- A 2005 study by the Institute for Research & Evaluation again concluded Heritage's program produced a significant and substantial delay in sexual initiation twelve months later.

Contact:

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