



Powered by Clickability

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

(Single Page View) | [Return to Paginated View](#)
Club helps girls to just say no

Akron teens encourage one another to abstain in Stop Having Sex group

By Kim Hone-McMahan
Beacon Journal

Published on Saturday, Apr 19, 2008

The girls, some with bulging bellies, gathered to chat about sex. They giggled and joked. And with great fanfare, shared their successes since they last met, a week earlier.

"My name is Kaila and I did not have sex."

The group of teenagers cheered.

"My name is Meagan and I'm still a virgin."

Shrieking, the girls pounded their hands on the table. On their wrists were neon orange bracelets that read, "Stop Having Sex Club."

The sisterhood is an outreach of First Glance, a popular faith-based ministry for kids in the Kenmore area.

"If someone is pressuring you to have sex, what do you say?" asked Noelle Beck, executive director of First Glance.

One by one, they shared their opinions. Say "no," one girl said. Others suggested walking away or telling him you have a sexually transmitted disease.

Though the girls were teasing about having an STD, a number of American teenage girls are infected.

A report released in March by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated that one in four girls between 14 and 19 is infected with an STD, including human papillomavirus, which can cause genital warts and cervical cancer. And the rate is even higher among African-American girls, half of whom are infected.

But the chance of getting a disease is only one reason these girls are swearing off sex. Some of the members of the Stop Having Sex Club were pregnant when they joined the group.

"This is what made me stop," offered 19-year-old Levade Graphenreed, placing a hand on her swollen stomach.

Attracting boys

Last September, First Glance created a Stop Having Sex Club for boys. Nobody showed up.

"Someone explained to me that it is social suicide for a teenage boy to admit he isn't having sex," Beck said.

So a couple of months later, the name of the group was changed to He-Man Woman Lovers Club. A more macho name, the First Glance folks reasoned, might attract boys. While the boys talked about sex, they also did things like camping and playing paintball games. Still, participation in the club dwindled and eventually died out.

Now, First Glance concentrates on the girls, hoping their influence will make them strong enough to resist having sex.

"These girls really and truly don't want to have sex, but it's always a battle," said Beck, who at 29, has a unique camaraderie with the teens.

First Glance, which has 560 student members and draws as many as 240 kids to its events each Thursday and Friday night, stands firm that abstinence is best and promotes that belief whenever possible. But awhile back, it decided to start a Teen Moms program because so many girls were pregnant.

"When students refuse to abstain, we encourage birth control," Beck said.

The director looked at the 10 girls sitting around the table. She asked those who had babies or were pregnant what they were going to say the next time a guy asked them to have sex.

"I'm going to just hand him my baby," said 18-year-old Chantel Blair. "Sex is overrated. Everybody hyped it up at school, but when it was over, I thought, 'Is that it?'"

Still, she admitted sex is addictive, and now she's pregnant.

"It wasn't worth it."

While the girls in the club who have babies regret getting pregnant, they still love their children.

Karen Freeman, director of the Teen Moms Club, believes more girls, at least locally, are getting pregnant now than when she began volunteering for the ministry seven years ago.

That goes hand in hand with another report recently released by the CDC showing that the teen birth rate in the United States rose slightly in 2006 for the first time since 1991.

"When a girl says she's pregnant," Freeman said, "no one flinches anymore."

Racy messages

Beck and Freeman say things like cell phones and the Internet make it easier for kids to hook up. While a kid might not have the guts to ask for sex in person, he or she may muster up enough nerve to do it in a text message or e-mail.

"A girl might text message a boy and say, 'I have a new bra. Do you want to see it?' And then take a picture with her cell phone and send it to him."

Among the girls attending the Stop Having Sex Club meeting, most said they had received a request for sex via text message. Others had received provocative pictures on their phones.

Alcohol also clouds clear thinking. When a First Glance volunteer asked how many of the girls were drinking when they had sex, about half raised their hands.

"What we are seeing a lot now are parties . . . where young people are consuming alcohol or other drugs," said Summit County Juvenile Court Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio. "They are engaging in sexual activity with other people at the party. I think both parties — the girls and boys — get themselves in a condition that they really are not capable of making a good decision or consenting to sexual activity."

Beck told the girls that she and the volunteers were going to begin "random sex checks."

"We are going to hold you more accountable," she said.

And then she and the First Glance volunteers gave them phone numbers.

"If it is two o'clock in the morning and a boy has you trapped somewhere and wants to have sex, call me. I will come and pick you up. No matter the time. No matter the place."

Kim Hone-McMahan can be reached at 330-996-3742 or kmcmahan@thebeaconjournal.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.ohio.com/news/17936944.html?page=all&c=y>



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright © 2008 Ohio.com