

Program offers help for teens in trouble

Ideally, a girl's teen years represent a relatively carefree time when a major worry might involve an upcoming math test or what to wear to the prom. Other big concerns might revolve around try-outs for cheerleading, competitive sports or roles in school plays.

At least that's the picture we adults are most comfortable with, and this image is certainly supported by the slim, confident teenage girls who smile at us from magazine covers and ads, not to mention the slim, confident, witty and emotionally mature adolescent girls typically featured on prime time TV.

Somehow, the image of a teenage girl wearing fashionable maternity wear as she diligently shops around for the best deal on

diapers and baby food just doesn't fit in to our comfortable stereotype.

The reason is, of course, that our society still has a hard time coping with the issue of teen sex. And, unless and until we come face-to-face with a teen who is obviously "in a family way", it's easy to pretend teen pregnancies ceased to be a reality soon after the invention of the Pill.

Well, it may be 1989 and a variety of effective contraceptives are indeed readily available throughout the region, but these things have not put an end to teen pregnancies in Halton. Although many of the pregnancies were terminated by abortion, many others were not. Last year at least 105 females, aged 14 to 19, gave birth

in Halton.

Young Parents Support Services (YPSS) is a new community program designed to enhance the physical and emotional well-being of both teen mothers and their babies. This service consists of an anonymous pregnancy counselling telephone line, individual and family counselling by professional social workers, one-to-one volunteer support and a pre-natal group for teens.

The pre-natal group is the most recent component of YPSS, representing a sharing of the best pre-natal resources available from the Halton Public Health Unit, Halton Adolescent Support Services and the Halton Children's Aid Society (CAS).

The newest service evolved to fill an identified community need for specialized teen pre-natal classes. Studies have shown expectant teens do not feel comfortable attending traditional pre-natal classes with married couples and older mothers-to-be. As a result, they are often ill prepared for the birthing experience.

The goals of the pre-natal group, which meets weekly in Oakville, are to provide pre-natal information as well as helping participants develop parenting skills and the ability to live independently. The program also offers information on adoption services and post-adoption counselling.

Corrie Galloway, Supervisor of Volunteer Services for Halton CAS,

Lifestyles

is excited about the Agency's involvement in this community endeavor. "This is a real opportunity for us to pool resources and give needed support to adolescent girls who are going through a difficult time," says Mrs. Galloway. "Many of these girls want to become competent mothers, but the odds are stacked against them because they typically lack the experience necessary to handle the responsibilities of new motherhood and ability to live independently in the community."

Boosting the self-esteem of the expectant teen moms is another vital component of the new program. "We want them to feel good about themselves and try to arrange a pick-me-up of some sort at each meeting," says pre-natal program co-ordinator Dianne Morrissey. She explains that the YPSS program offers a varied lunchtime program dealing with issues as diverse as nutritional needs during pregnancy and exercises that will help you get back into your favorite jeans after the baby arrives. This information is brought to participants via guest speakers

and appropriate films and videos. "It's important to feel good about yourself while you're carrying a baby," notes Ms. Morrissey, who also happens to be a mother of two. "We try to make the weekly sessions fun as well as informative." It is also hoped some of the teens will become friends, thus supporting one another emotionally during and after the pregnancy. Trained volunteers are linked to assist a young woman, if requested. They may provide transportation, give individual support and remain involved for some time after the infant is born.

Those who decide to keep their babies are subsequently referred to an ongoing community support group, such as a parent-child centre. The key is to link the young mothers with the community program(s) best suited to their needs.

If you or someone you know might benefit from this new community endeavor, contact Dianne Morrissey at 844-8211 or the confidential pregnancy telephone line (844-5502). Free transportation is available to and from the weekly pre-natal meetings.

Entertainment

Backstage with GLT

By MARY JANE WALZAK

Herald Special

The job of acting is always a fulfilling one because at the end of your performance each and every night the audience applauds.

The rewards for working backstage are much more subtle but can be just as fulfilling. One of the advantages of having an adjudicated show is that there will be a knowledgeable person from outside your group ready and willing to tell you all the things that you did right (or wrong) and give you some tips on how you could have done them better.

"Night Must Fall" is the next production of the Georgetown Little Theatre and much of its success will depend on the talents and plain hard work of many dedicated people you will never see on stage. They may not be seen but their effects will be felt if something goes wrong.

The sound people (Derek Remes, Tom Robson and Jason Carter) ensure that you hear the correct music and sound effects at the right time. If everything goes well you don't notice them but if the telephone rings when it's not supposed to or if it doesn't ring when it should then everyone notices.

The set designer and builders (Ian Oldaker, Les Heed, Ron Hunt, Gerry Ladouceur and Glen Woolley) make sure that the stage is sturdy and that all the trappings work as they should. If one of the actors is supposed to bang a door and it falls off its hinges then there are some red faces back stage.

The lighting designer and technicians (Ian Oldaker) give you the proper level of light on stage and help to establish the mood by the use of the proper color, intensity and position of the lights. The properties or props people (Phyllis Stevens, Olive Judd, Louise Slaney and Neil Frawley) have an especially challenging job in putting all the props in the right places and with the right actors every night. Frustration is the name of

the game since the actors tend to walk away with their props instead of returning them - this can lead to problems when you are trying to replace a prop that it took you three weeks to find in the first place.

Luckily GLT has such a dedicated group of backstage workers that one never seems to notice production problems while the play is going on and that is how it should be. So the next time you are watching a play and nothing untoward happens, spare a thought for the backstage people and give them an extra bit of applause.

Your next opportunity to catch a play with GLT is Feb. 17 when "Night Must Fall" opens. It runs through Feb. 18, 22, 23, 24 and 25. Tickets are available at Royal LePage Real Estate at 170 Guelph St. or you can get more information by calling the Box Office at 877-3700.

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