

# Teen Talk

From Page A1

Ninety-eight percent of the girls in the program are black, she said.

"We would really like to expand that," she said. "We have recruited white girls to Teen Talk. Teen pregnancy is not just a black problem. In Winston-Salem it's more visible in the black community. But we know that a large number of kids from all racial backgrounds are sexually active."

Ms. Brandes said that she doesn't know why more white girls do not participate in the program.

"I don't know if it is a location issue or what," she said.

"The white girls we do have," she said, "have come and stayed."

Ms. Brandes said that the girls have adopted a motto, "Make a life for yourself before you make another life."

"A lot of what Teen Talk is about is expanding options to kids and giving them coping skills," Ms. Brandes said.

"We try to have fun," she said about the meetings. "We talk a lot about making responsible decisions, about sexual involvement and dealing with pressure from guys. We also do things on fashion and beauty and on feeling good about yourself."

Ms. Brandes said that if the program is to be successful, then it can't take a one-prong approach like many statewide programs aimed at postponing sexual involvement.

"The reality is that a lot of kids are going to be sexually active and will need support and information about it," she said. "I think kids will have to have something to hope for. I see a lot of 12- and 13-year-olds who don't have hope. They don't have any goals, and they see nothing out there for them. So they say, 'Why not? Why not have a baby?'"

Ms. Brandes said that while she uses a lot of community resource people to talk to the girls, she doesn't believe fancy speakers keep the girls coming back to the program.

"I think relationships keep the kids," she said. "We try to have interesting programs, but in the long run relationships keep kids in the program."

The nice thing about Teen Talk is that the kids reinforce each other as well as get adult input, Ms. Brandes said.

"Kids will listen to each other faster than they will listen to adults," she said.

The combination of the adult input with input from the girls strengthens the program, she said.

Besides being speakers, adults also provide another important function in the program. Several women in the community have chosen to participate in the program as Teen Links.

Teen Links are volunteers who are matched with girls in the program and agree to spend time with them each week.

Participation in the match is also voluntary on the girls' parts.

"Girls that come to the Teen Talk group are interviewed and asked if they want to be paired up with a Teen Link," Ms. Brandes said.

Women who want to participate in the program have to go through an interview and a training session.

Right now there are 15 matches in the program. More adult volunteers are needed.

"We get a lot of strong leadership from professional women in Winston-Salem," Ms. Brandes said. "I'm real pleased about that. I think black women have a particular concern about teen pregnancy and how it has affected black women -- politically, economically and socially."

Four of the Teen Links were teen parents, she said.

"They've been there and the teens know that," she said. "They have a real awareness and sensitivity to what these kids are going through."

Twenty-six-year-old Monica Wilson, who is a Teen Link, has

been there. A teen mother at 13, she was one of the fortunate ones, having gotten support from both her family and her baby's father.

She said she went on to finish high school. During this time her daughter's father remained supportive, and four years ago they were married.

Mrs. Wilson said that she became interested in becoming a Teen Link after she heard a talk by Ms. Brandes.

She was matched in June to 15-year-old twins. One of the twins is a teen mother.

"We haven't gotten close yet," Mrs. Wilson said. "We've been on outings and they've been over to my house. They really haven't

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-- Beth Brandes

opened up yet as far as trusting."

But Mrs. Wilson said that she believes that with time the girls will open up to her.

"They seem like pretty level-headed girls," she said.

Yvonne Booker, another Teen Link, is matched with a pregnant 13-year-old.

"We've established a good relationship," Mrs. Booker said. "We spend on the average of 10 to 12 hours a week together. I feel real good about the relationship. We still have a ways to go."

Mrs. Booker said that having recently experienced pregnancy herself has helped her in her relationship with her match. Mrs. Booker has an 8-month-old son.

"This is her first and it was my first," she said. "I was able to

share some things with her."

Both Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Booker are employed with the Head Start Division of Family Services.

For 12-year-old Marneeka Robbins, being matched with a Teen Link has meant being constantly on the go.

Miss Robbins said that her match has taken her to ballgames and out for pizza.

"She's nice," Miss Robbins said about her Teen Link match, who is a nurse. "She took me over to her house. She has two sons. Those are my big brothers. They call me little sister."

Miss Robbins said that in the Teen Talk program she has learned about different methods of birth control and how to deal with different pressures as well as about makeup and about setting goals.

Since being matched, Miss Robbins said that she has decided she wants to follow in her match's footsteps and become a nurse.

Miss Robbins hopes that the Teen Link program is around when she grows up so she can help others.

"I want to be a Teen Link and get out there and help kids to prevent pregnancy," she said.

Ms. Brandes is enthusiastic about the Teen Link participation and about the Teen Talk program itself, but she said it still may not be enough.

"Teen Talk alone is not going to reduce the teen pregnancy rate in Forsyth County," she said. "If there were 40 Teen Talks in this city with 40 or more girls, then that might be different. This is the type of program that can be duplicated by churches, civic organizations, etc."

Teen Talk will continue meeting during the fall months, Ms. Brandes said, when there will be a job fair.

Ms. Brandes said that she would also like to start employability training with 15- to 17-year-old girls.

# Neal

From Page A12

Infant and Children Nutrition Program and the Head Start Program. "All of these federal programs are important to poor people," he said.

Neal supports protecting the American textile industry from foreign competition. He voted for the bill that limited imports of textile goods to the United States.

That bill was vetoed by President Reagan. An effort to override the veto failed to receive enough votes in Congress.

Neal also supports a strong na-

tional defense with financial limitations. He voted for a \$275 billion defense budget that the House approved last month.

"All of us, black and white, benefit from a strong national defense," he said. "It is important to our survival."

Neal supports a mutual nuclear freeze between the United States and the Soviet Union. "We must end this nuclear arms race," he said. "It is stupid and expensive."

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47. Bojangles
48. Northside Fish Market

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69. Hop-In (First St.)
70. Food Fair (First St.)
71. Baptist Hospital
72. Amoco (Cloverdale)
73. Kroger
74. Hop-In (Stratford Rd.)
75. Papers & Paperbacks (Hanes Mall)
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