

TAPS Supporters Are Concerned With Problems Of Teenage Pregnancy

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

TAPS Supporters is a group that is actively concerned about the problems of teenage pregnancy. Working with TAPS (the county's alternative school for pregnant teens), the group's dedicated volunteers are doing a lot to help.

"TAPS doesn't have a PTA, so we're the support group that assists with programs and activities," explained Mary Maxwell, TAPS chairperson and Information Technician in the associate superintendent's office.

Maxwell also serves on the board of the Mecklenburg Council on Adolescent Pregnancy. According to the Council, six Mecklenburg teenagers get pregnant each day. One fifth of all teen pregnancies occur during the first month of sexual activity. Of those carrying their pregnancies to term, 96 percent keep their babies. The percentage not finishing high school is 80 percent. Other startling statistics: the suicide rate for teenage mothers is seven times the rate for other teens. Over 70 percent of teen mothers are on welfare for up to five years. Nearly three quarters of all teen marriages end in divorce. Child abuse among adolescent parents is 100 times greater than in the general population. Men who marry in their teens are more likely to have low paying, unskilled jobs.

With such adversity facing them, teenage parents need all the help they can get. That's where TAPSS comes in. The goals of the organization as listed in its pamphlet are to strengthen student morale by providing guidance, enrichment and incentive; to assist the staff of TAPS in planning programs of community interest and social significance; to help with programs and action projects; and to involve parents in order to better assist students and staff in reaching their objectives. Maxwell summed up the goals by saying, "We are here to lend a helping hand."

She related her interest in the program. "I feel that education is a vital tool for survival, and when anything interrupts a teenager's education I become concerned. When the reason is because of adolescent pregnancy, I'm doubly concerned."

According to Maxwell, "The TAPS Supporters are here to offer support and encouragement. We advise



Glenda Manning

them to talk with us about their needs for closeness and other feelings that sometimes lead to sex. We believe that we are a primary organization for instilling the importance of education and values related to sexuality. Community and parental involvement is important to these young ladies when they become pregnant and it is our responsibility to reassure them that they are an invaluable and intricate part of our society."

Each TAPS Supporter has five to ten girls and their parents to keep in touch with. Students - and their parents - can discuss problems with members. Stressing the importance of parental involvement, Maxwell stated, "We find that the lines of communication between parents and students are broken. They don't communicate. It's hard to get the parents involved, especially when the school program is concerned." She attributed some of the lack of involvement to job conflicts, noting that when the problem is transportation or child care, the Supporters help out.

TAPSS co-chairperson, Glenda Manning, was encouraged by parent attendance at an open house for parents earlier in the school year. "We broke a record," she declared.

Both Manning and Maxwell emphasized the need for community involvement, as well. A monthly planning meeting is held at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at the Merry Oaks Center. "We solicit help from the community, from fraternities, sororities, and other organizations. A number have

adopted us," acknowledged Maxwell. One way that some groups help is by holding a yearly shower to gather baby items for the young women. Others collect coupons or give financial assistance.

Manning, who works as a community assistant in the school system, cited some of her reasons for concern. "Our poorest people are young children with no fathers, and these are they. That's where they come from," she noted. "Their first five years are most important. They deserve a good chance. Enhancing the lives of their mothers gives them this chance," she said, adding, "If their mothers are discarded, so are they. That compounds the problem." She expressed her belief that those living in traditional family units must share what they have in order to help give the young mothers and their babies a chance.

On tap for TAPSS next year is dealing with the problem of child care so that, after their babies are born, the teenagers can continue their education. Too often, Maxwell



Mary Maxwell

explained, child care arrangements fall through, leaving a student with little alternative but to quit school to care for her baby.

Declared Manning, "We need to arouse the concern of the community because the children of these students will be cared for by us. Most will grow up without fathers. We begin by first supporting that parent, and our first task is to see that she finishes her education."

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Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Carr
She is the former Vanessa Evans

Miss Vanessa Evans Is Bride Of Gerald Carr

Solemn wedding vows were recently exchanged between Vanessa Elizabeth Evans and Gerald Carr. The wedding which took place at Memorial Presbyterian Church was officiated by Rev. Edward Newberry.

Given in marriage by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John S. Evans, Sr., the bride was dressed in a white gown accented with rhinestones, lace and pearls.

Wearing outfits of colors mauve and gray, the maid of honor was Annette Queyquep and the matron of honor was Sherry Alexander. The remaining bridal attendants were Pam Greniger, Laura Webber, Cheryl Muench, Quenle Bailey and Patricia Lee Evans. Senior bridesmaid was Leslie Caldwell and the junior bridesmaid was Venicia Whitley.

For the flower girls the bride chose Kim Alexander, Detra Colman and Monique Evans.

As best man the groom selected Peter Raeford. He was assisted by ushers: Garfield Carr, Felton Carr, Andre Carr, Mike Coleman, John Evans, Rick Frontis, Guy Weber, and Ron Raeford; senior usher, Kevin Carr and junior usher, Robert Rodriguez.

Master Jasmine Whitley was the ring bearer.

Music for the ceremony was provided by organist Blanche Oliver, and soloists, Margaret Priest and Javel Wilson.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Evans, Sr., the bride is a graduate of Southern Illinois Uni-

versity at Carbondale where she obtained her Master's of Science degree in Physical Education-Dance. Presently she is teaching dance and physical fitness.

Also a graduate of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where he received his BS in Business Administration, the groom coaches football at Davidson College. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Orlando Carr.

After the wedding, a reception was held at the Adams Mark Hotel.

The couple honeymooned on a Mardi Gras to Cozumel Mexico and Grand Cayon, Jamaica.

Drivers Of The Month For January Chosen

The CMS Bus Drivers of the Month for January are Curtis Gibson of the North Mecklenburg transportation area and Carolyn Rushing of the Independence area.

Curtis, who is 18, is a junior at North Mecklenburg High School. He drives bus 89 for Alexander Junior High School and North Mecklenburg. He is the winner in the category for drivers with three years or less of experience.

Rushing drives bus 847 for Hickory Grove Elementary School and has been driving a bus for 11 years. She has a perfect safety record. In addition to her driving responsibilities, she is a classroom aide at Hickory Grove. She is the winner in the category for drivers with more than three years of experience.

The Bus Driver of the Month competition is sponsored by Dick Keffer Pontiac and WSOC-TV in cooperation with CMS. Each driver receives \$100.

City Of Charlotte

Will Hold Workshop For Service Firms

The City of Charlotte will hold a workshop for all suppliers and professional service firms on Saturday, February 16, at 10 a.m. at McDonald's Cafeteria, I-85 and Beatties Ford Road.

The purpose of this workshop will be to further acquaint M/WBE suppliers and professional service firms with small order/large order needs for M/WBE vendors and professional services owners. The City's purchasing staff will also discuss contracts, fill-in order, emergency purchases and the like.

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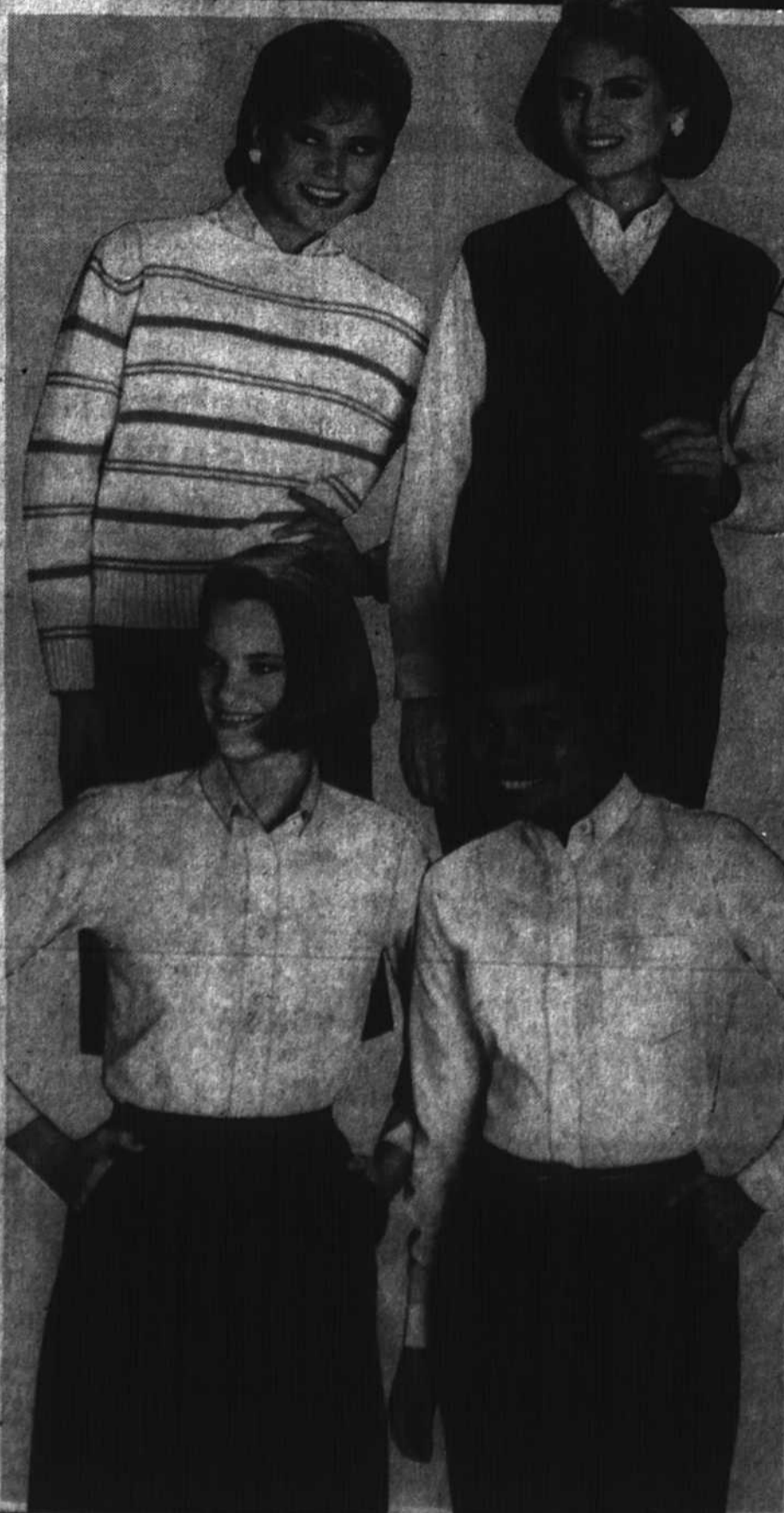
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