

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Special To The Post

The family and friends of alcoholics suffer from the emotional turmoil surrounding the disease but are not plagued by the physical abuse of alcoholism. However, there is one unfortunate group that cannot willingly escape the physical damage inflicted by alcoholism: the unborn children of women who drink during pregnancy. The developing infants suffer from the effects of alcoholism that sometimes include irreversible birth defects. A mother-to-be who drinks during pregnancy also risks having a stillborn birth.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) has been recognized as one of the three major causes of birth defects and accompanying mental retardation in the United States, according to William Hutchinson of Project First Step at the Caswell Center in Kinston. Project First Step is a two-year-old project that receives funding to study Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in North Carolina. Part of the work involves increased

Fifth in series

screening for FAS and providing information and referral for the 32 eastern North Carolina counties.

"It has been estimated that up to four out of every 1,000 births in the United States are affected by alcohol," he said. "We think that North Carolina's rate is at least equal to that and maybe higher."

Alcohol consumption affects the fetus by slowing the growth of developing cells and robbing the body of protein and vitamins that it desperately needs, Hutchinson said. In the full blown fetal alcohol syndrome infants have three or more abnormalities, including facial distortions, growth deficiencies, unsightly birth marks, and heart and kidney defects. Drinking during pregnancy can also cause a child to be nervous and jumpy, poorly coordinated, and of below normal height.

He said that the North Carolina Department of Human Resources' Council on Developmental Disabilities has made the reduction in the frequency of fetal alcohol syndrome the number one priority of its Prevention Task Force. The task force is made up of a wide range of health care professionals across North Carolina.

The Council on Developmental Disabilities currently is funding two projects in North Carolina to develop more public awareness about the dangers of FAS. One of these is Project First Step at Caswell Center Kinston. The other, the Comprehensive Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Project at Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, has established a toll-free telephone hotline service. People may call from anywhere in the state at 1-800-532-6302.

"This problem has been around for a long time," he said. "However, only in the past 10 years has it come to the medical community's attention as a distinct syndrome and cause of birth defects."

Hutchinson stressed that it is important for women not to drink if they are even thinking about having a child. "There is really no safe amount of alcohol for a pregnant woman to drink," he said. "We recommend abstaining both before, and during pregnancy because so much of the damage occurs in the first two months of pregnancy, when women don't realize that they are pregnant."

Hickory Grove Lions

Sponsors Plant Sale

On Friday, May 10, and Saturday, May 11, the Hickory Grove Lions Club will sponsor a Mother's Day Plant and Flower Sale, beginning at 9 a.m.

The event, which will be held to support community service projects of the Hickory Grove Lions Club, will take place in the Eastland Mall parking lot, near the intersection of Central Avenue and Albemarle Rd.

For more information, call Richard Speight at 537-2242.

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Carletta Black, an 11th grader at North Mecklenburg, doesn't carry "Teddy" to school every day, but she thought just this one time wouldn't matter. (Photo By Bryon Cooper)

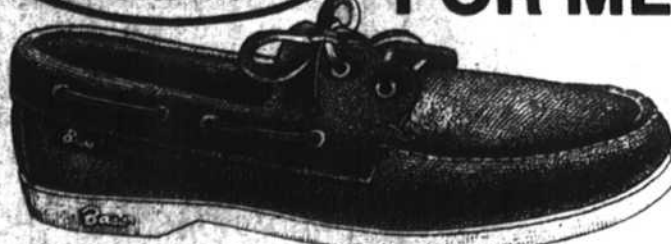


With the end of school just around the corner and exams coming up, junior Christena Arrington makes sure she will be ready. She uses her time wisely in the North Mecklenburg Senior High School Library. In addition to studying, Miss Arrington also enjoys modeling. (Photo By Bryon Cooper)

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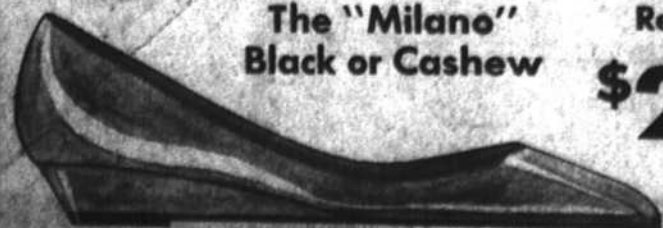


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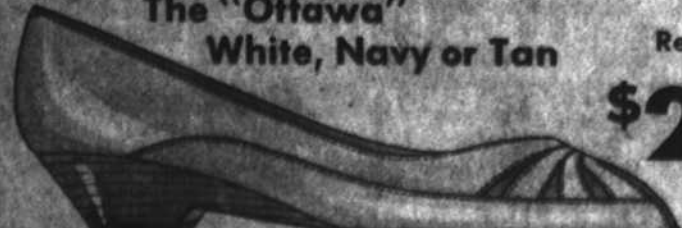
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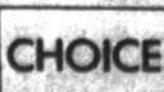
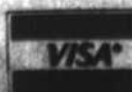
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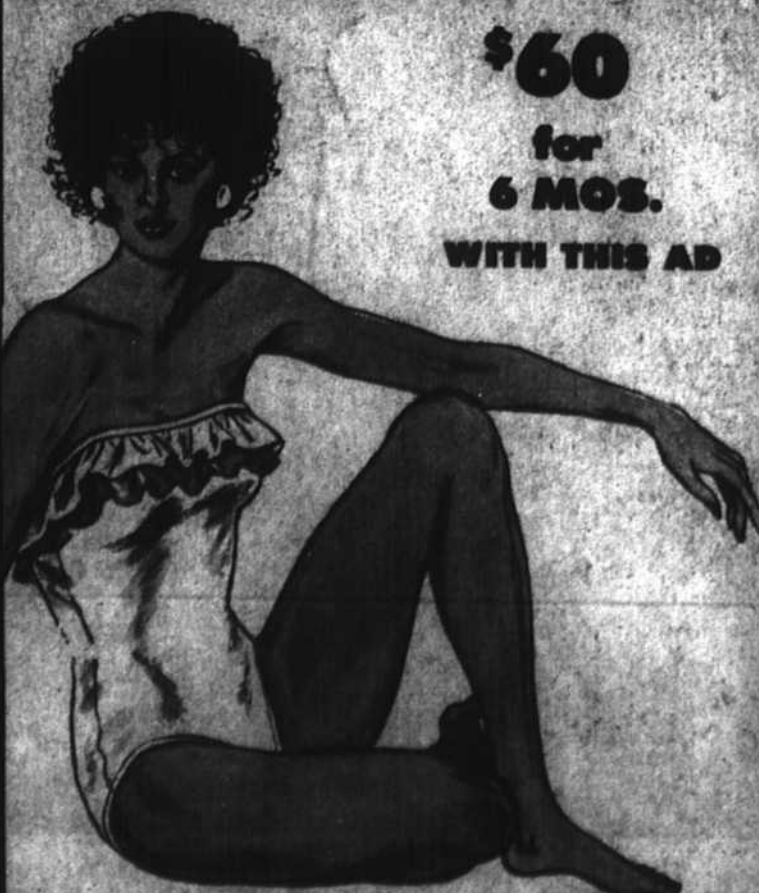
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