

Religion

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Hand to Hand: Touching teens with care, hope and friendship

ROBIN BARKSDALE
Community News Editor

A local program is offering a hand of hope and caring to teen-age mothers throughout the county who are facing the challenges of parenting and the prospect of a repeat pregnancy while still in their teens.

Hand to Hand, an outreach program sponsored through the Catholic Social Services agency, provides support, care and counseling for pregnant teens and for teen-age mothers throughout Forsyth County. Staff members said that Hand to Hand is unique because it fills a void left by agencies that primarily deal with

"We try to meet a girl where she's at rather than where we want her to be. We take her where she is and we work towards where she wants to be. We're here to enhance their life options. We're letting them know that they do have choices. Our major goal is to help a girl gain control of her life. We tell them that they can have control. Their parents don't have to have it and a social worker doesn't have to have it."

-- Constance McVey

pregnancy prevention.

"The concept of Hand to Hand is to reduce the second pregnancy rate," said Yvonne Booker, a program social worker. "We want to eliminate teens having a second child at such a young age."

Constance McVey, the director of Hand to Hand, said that 43 percent of teen-agers that have babies have a second child within three years. Hand to Hand currently works with 55 girls and offers monthly support groups, prenatal counseling, assistance with time management skills and friendship.

Mrs. Booker said that one of the most helpful components of the Hand to Hand program is its focus on time management. Many young girls, she said, become overwhelmed and frustrated with the responsibilities they assume by having children. Mrs. Booker said that Hand to Hand works to help teen mothers balance their lives so that they can continue with their education and care for their children at the same time.

"It's really difficult for the girls to get up in the

morning and dress themselves, dress the baby, feed the baby, get the baby to the day care center or to grandma's house and then get to school herself," said Mrs. Booker. "We work with them on time management kinds of things."

Another focus of the program, she said, is on supplying young mothers with all kinds of positive experiences. Building self-esteem is crucial both in terms of improving parenting skills among teens and in terms of cutting off the cycle of the children of teen-age mothers having babies when they also are in their teens.

"Sometimes these girls don't get a lot of positives at home," she said. "As long as they are here they're fine and they're given a lot of positives but then they go home and they might be surrounded by a lot of negatives. So what we have is a war to keep them positive. We work to give these girls self-esteem. A lot of times, teen mothers don't have a lot of self-esteem. Then they have another child and it continues. They pass that low self-esteem on to their children and then their children have babies while they are teen-agers. The cycle just continues. At Hand to Hand we believe that if we can give these girls more self-esteem, they'll pass it on to their children and maybe we can help stop the cycle."

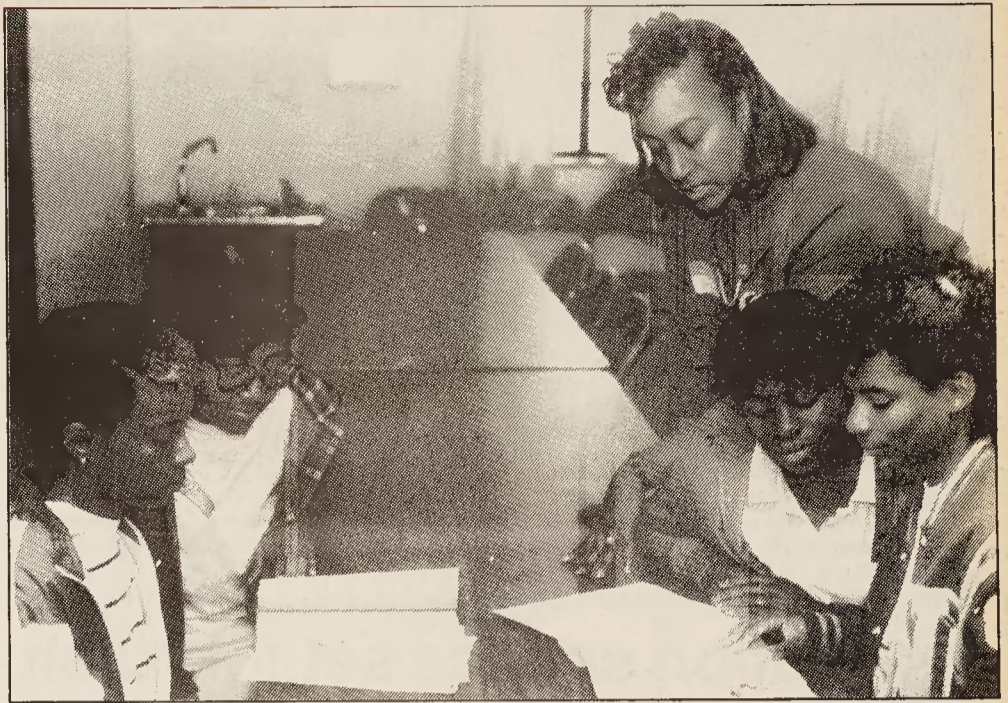
But Ms. McVey said that the staff and its trained corps of volunteers are careful not to make judgment on the youngsters and not to transfer their own values and beliefs to the girls.

"We try to meet a girl where she's at rather than where we want her to be," she said. "We take her where she is and we work towards where she wants to be. We're here to enhance their life options. We're letting them know that they do have choices. Our major goal is to help a girl gain control of her life. We tell them that they can have control. Their parents don't have to have it and a social worker doesn't have to have it."

Mrs. Booker said that it is important that the teens retain control of their lives and learn to be responsible for themselves and for their children.

"She always has control of her life and where she wants to be," she said. "We just guide and steer. A lot of them know what they want to do, they just can't sit down and map out what to do first."

The Hand to Hand program began in April 1988 and has had more than 150 teen-age mothers come through the program since its inception. Mrs. Booker and Ms. McVey said that the feedback from former and



Staff photo

Yvonne Booker, program social worker, discusses time management with Shawinise Dobson, Shana Clark, Elisa Wells and Kim Frazier.

current program participants indicates that Hand to Hand is making a difference. But they stress, too, that the program's existence and success is not a condoning of teen-age pregnancy. Rather, they said, it is a statement that they are willing to offer a second chance to teen-agers who somewhere along the line have not made appropriate decisions.

"We don't want to say that it's okay to have a baby at such a young age but because there is a need for this, we are here," said Mrs. Booker. "We want them to know that, granted, they are very young and that they haven't made the best choice but they're here and this is now so let's get on with it."

The program also makes use of a corps of trained volunteers who serve as mentors for the teens. Volunteers are matched with pregnant teens and with teen-age mothers. Ms. McVey said that Hand to Hand volunteers are special people because they offer their time to work with people sometimes in very difficult situations.

"I always tell our volunteers that if they want to do something easy, that you get recognition for, give

blood. This requires a lot more," said Ms. McVey. "We stress that your answers to other people's problems won't work. We're very, very thankful for our volunteer response. The kinds of volunteers we get are deeply committed. All volunteers are to be commended but Hand to Hand volunteers, because of the kinds of situations they are in, are especially to be commended."

Hand to Hand is funded by a grant from the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources. The program's current grant will expire in September and the agency has applied for several state grants.

Ms. McVey, who previously worked with abused and neglected children, said she came into the program and stays in because of its positive nature and because it offers encouragement to young mothers.

"This program is about life, hope and tomorrow. Before this I was in child abuse and neglect and there rarely were any happy endings," she said. "This is about helping children and helping them have hope for tomorrow."

CHURCH CALENDAR

THURSDAY, MARCH 29

Carver Road Christian Church, 3200 Carver Road, will hold 18th anniversary services for its pastor, Willie N. Jones, March 29 at 7:30 p.m. The services will conclude Sunday, April 1, at 11 a.m. New Light Baptist Church will be the guests Thursday.

FRIDAY, MARCH 30

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 810 N. Highland Ave., will continue its Lenten series, "What Christians Need to Know/Theological Issues in Christian/Jewish/Muslim Dialogue" with special guest Irwin Shakir at 7 p.m. Stations of the Cross will be observed April 6 at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 31

The second annual dinner/auction/fashion show of Progressive Apostolic Church will be held at Reynolds Health Center Cafeteria, 741 Highland Ave., from 4 to 7 p.m. Admission is \$5. There will be a variety of items auctioned including automobiles, household and personal items, trips, services, etc. For more information call 942-1625. Bishop O.D. LeGrant is the church's pastor.

The Lay Organization of St. James AME Church will hold a rummage and bake sale from 9 a.m. until... The church is located at 1501 N. Patterson Ave.

SUNDAY, APRIL 1

Oak Grove Baptist Church's Senior Choir will present its annual Easter cantata, "The Last Supper," at 5 p.m. The church is located in Walkertown. The Rev. I.L. Anthony is host pastor.

The Sensational Seniors of St. Peter's World Outreach Center will hold their Sensational Seniors program at 6 p.m. Special speakers and music will be rendered by the Sensational Seniors. The church is located at 1031 N. Highland Ave. For more information call 722-2285 Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4

The Rev. Jim Lewis and Meredith Patterson will speak on the work of the Episcopal Church in El Salvador at 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 520 Summit St. Rev. Lewis is director of Christian Social Ministries for the central diocese of North Carolina. Ms. Patterson is a play reader at the Church of the Holy Comforter in Burlington. The program is sponsored by the Disciples Peace Fellowship and the Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America as part of the series, "Carrying the Cross in Central America."

SATURDAY, APRIL 7

There will be a fur fashion extravaganza and dinner, sponsored by

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W-S Bible College plans 40th anniversary celebration

Winston-Salem Bible College will celebrate its 40th anniversary beginning with a kick-off banquet Friday, March 30, at 7 p.m. at the Benton Convention Center.

The featured speaker will be Rudolph Mullings, minister of Martindale Avenue Church of Christ in Indianapolis.

He also is a 1968 graduate of Winston-Salem Bible College.

Special music for the occasion will be provided by the Young Adult Choir of Baileytown Christian Church in Walnut Cove, the Ambassadors of Winston-Salem Bible College, Terry Moorefield, granddaughter of Leland Tyrrell, and Chuck Benford, student recruiter for the school.

Founded in 1950 during the days of segregation, the college was the dream of Dr. R.L. Peters, a local black evangelist of the Christian Church. Seeing the lack of education in himself and his fellow ministers, Dr. Peters was determined to improve their quality of ministry.



The WSBC campaign committee, from left, includes William E. Johnson, Clifton Jones, Nelson McCall, Raymond Goolsby, W. Ray Kelley and Ron Hairston.

With the assistance of a Piedmont white evangelist, J.W. West, the Christian Institute was founded in 1945. In 1946, the struggling little

school on Wheeler Street received a boost in leadership from Brother Aubrey L. Payne, minister of a circuit of four Churches of Christ

north of Winston-Salem.

In 1949, still struggling and almost dead, the school called Leland Tyrrell to the presidency. The institute, re-organized and incorporated as Winston-Salem Bible College, opened its door again Jan. 16, 1950, and has continued its work until this day.

By 1975, the property on Wheeler Street was outgrown and a beautiful 27-acre campus purchased on Northhamptom Drive. There, the school has continued in its purpose to challenge men and women to learn more about God's Word, to train themselves as Saul who sat at the feet Gamaliel. R.L. Peters recognized that a minister - called of God - needed to be prepared to his highest level in order to lead others.

The college has had many successors during the last 40 years, but the greatest measure of her success has been in the hundreds of students who have gone through her halls of academia.

Morning Star Baptist Church pre-Easter program will feature mezzo soprano Cassandra Scales in concert

Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church will hold its pre-Easter musical concert Sunday, April 1, at 5 p.m.

The program will feature Cassandra Scales and the Morning Star Combined Choir.

Ms. Scales, a mezzo soprano, graduated from Parkland High School in 1973 and received her bachelor's degree in music education from Winston-Salem State University.

Ms. Scales was a member of both the Amani Urithi Players and the new Piedmont Repertory Company from 1974 to 1980. During that time she performed such musicals as "Moanin'," "Changing Rituals," "Celebration of God and Man," "Our First Show" and "Roar of the Greasepaint."

She was the vocal coach for North Forsyth's 1978 production of "The King and I" and represented Winston-Salem State University on two occasions in solo performances for Robert L. Morris and Irene Sears at Salem College's Composers Symposium.

In addition, Ms. Scales has performed for weddings and with Morning Star Baptist's Young Adult Choir.

In 1981, Ms. Scales, a member of Morning Star, received her master's degree from Oklahoma University. In Oklahoma, she performed both musical and theatrical productions ranging from "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope" to "A Raisin in the Sun."

In 1984 she performed operas with the Cimarron Circuit Opera



Scales

Company and became assistant director in 1988.

Ms. Scales also has studied in

Austria at the American Institute of Musical Studies.

She will be accompanied by Edward L. Patterson, a pianist.

He is a 1977 graduate of Winston-Salem State University and was placed in "Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities in 1976-77."

He is the recipient of the WSSU Clark S. Brown Scholarship for musical excellence. Mr. Patterson currently is choir director/pianist for the Mount Zion Baptist Church Inspirational Choir and has worked on productions with Maya Angelou.

Dr. Marion Thomas will be the guest organist. He is a WSSU graduate and is organist for Shiloh Baptist Church. Dr. Thomas also has worked with choirs throughout the state.