

Big Sisters To Help Pregnant Teens

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

Teenage pregnancy is a national problem; it is also very much a problem locally. Now, two area programs are joining forces in an attempt to help pregnant teens and teenage mothers overcome their difficult situation.

Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Charlotte will be matching Big Sisters with students enrolled in the county's TAPS (Teen-Age Parents Services) program.

TAPS principal, Eulada Watt, is "super excited" at the prospect of participating in the project. "There's a tremendous need here," she pointed out. "The students (who will be matched with Big Sisters) are in dire need of a stronger emotional support base." To be eligible, not only must the young woman want a relationship with a Big Sister, but her mother must also be receptive to the idea.

Robert Woodall, director of Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Charlotte, explained that the project grew out of the national association's concern that Big Brothers-Big Sisters programs around the country address the special needs of young girls. Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Charlotte is one of 12 in the nation asked to develop a program to deal with that community's unique needs.

The focus will be on junior high students, 15 years old and under. According to Woodall, the hope is that, through the influence of Big Sisters, the girls involved will not have additional unwanted pregnancies and will realize the importance of completing their education.

"We're particularly concerned about the follow-up aspects, especially with this age range," Watt noted. Explaining that lack of attention is a major contributing factor in teen pregnancy, she added that students returning to regular schools after the birth of their babies need extra support that TAPS is not able to give. Students will also benefit from the extra attention of a Big Sister while still attending TAPS.

Another important aspect of the project, the principal acknowledged, is that having a Big Sister will bring some fun into a girl's life. "When the baby comes, she gives up her childhood," Watt commented, adding that a young mother is especially susceptible to becoming a child abuser, in part because her life has been changed by the arrival and demands of a child, and she has had to give up so much.

Big Brothers-Big Sisters will be



Eulada Watt
.....TAPS principal

responsible for recruiting, screening, and training Big Sisters. Big Sisters and Little Sisters are matched according to interests and personality. "We encourage them to just do the things they enjoy doing and that come naturally," remarked Woodall. The emphasis is on building a relationship between the two, rather than spending money on a lot of activities.

Woodall hopes that by the end of this school term, 10-12 students needing Big Sisters will have been identified, and a pool of 24 Big Sisters will be available to match with the girls.

Big Sisters must be at least 21 years of age and employed, advised Woodall. A woman interested in

befriending a pregnant teen needs a lot of acceptance and the maturity to be a good role model. Watt added that volunteers need to be "sensitive to the complexities of personalities of adolescent mothers;" be willing to bridge the gap between the TAPS experience and the student's continuing education, and to maintain a relationship after the girl has returned to school; accept the TAPS goal of working toward no future unwanted pregnancies; and help the young mother set realistic goals.

Although the project is beginning with TAPS students, Woodall is hopeful that, once a program is designed to fit the needs of pregnant teens, it will be opened to students not attending TAPS.

Women interested in becoming Big Sisters to a pregnant teenager (or to other girls) can either call 377-3963 or drop by the Big Brothers-Big Sisters office, Room 306, the United Way building, 301 S. Broadway St., any time Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Karen Armstead

Washington, D.C. - Karen Denise Armstead of Charlotte has been elected to membership in the American Society of Notaries, a national nonprofit organization of persons who hold the office of notary public.

Ms. Armstead is at Central Piedmont Community College, Room 204 LRC Building, P. O. Box 25009, Charlotte.



Valecia McDowell
.....Visits grandparents



Matt Hayes
.....Wants to read



Carol Davis
.....Visiting New York

Opinions At First Ward

How Will You Spend Your Vacation?

While some parents aren't crazy about the idea of having their children home for the summer, most every child who's spent nine months in the classroom can't wait for the last day of school. Toward the end of May, if not earlier, even the most attentive children get restless and yearn for summer vacation.

First Ward Elementary students, like students elsewhere, are eagerly awaiting their summer freedom from the daily routine of school. Here are their comments.

● VALECIA MCDOWELL is in Ms. Cannon's sixth grade. She looks forward to summer "because you don't have to worry about getting up early in the morning, and I don't have homework." McDowell discloses, "I'd like to go visit my grandparents in Cuthbert, Ga. The last time I saw them was Christmas." Other than that, the Beacon Hill Lane resident doesn't have any other summer plans.

● MATT HAYES, in Ms. Horne's fifth grade, lives on Meringue Place. "I want to read a lot of books and try to go into further research in science," declares Hayes, who says he plans to go to the library and get lots of books about science. "I also like learning about other cultures and about people," he adds. Be-

Golden State Acquires Winston-Mutual

Black-owned Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, based in Los Angeles, California, this week announced the consolidation of Winston Mutual Life Insurance Company of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, into the GSM family. GSM will celebrate its 60th anniversary July 23, 1985.

The former Winston Mutual will be known as The Winston Mutual Region of Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company.

Gorge Hill, former president of Winston Mutual and a board member of GSM, will assume the title of Senior Vice President of the Los Angeles-based corporation.

Hill's years of life insurance experience and leadership further increases the strength of an already strong GSM management team.

The merger adds to Golden State Mutual's insurance in force \$297,092,000, to its annual premium income more than \$2,580,257 and brings with it more than \$4,923,934 in assets.

These additions mean that GSM's insurance in force is now \$4,324,703,000 with annual premium income of \$43,186,947 and the Company's assets have reached



Jermaine Sadler
....."Just sit and relax"

sides catching up on his reading, though, the fifth grader wants to "just play with my friends. I like school, but I like summer better."

● CAROL DAVIS lives on Davidson Street and spends her school days in Ms. Bishop's fourth grade. She's definitely looking forward to vacation "so I can go to the beach, go swimming, and ride my bike." Noting that she has a lot of friends to



Brent Chowning
.....Going to beach

play with, Davis admits she won't miss school "because I hate to work." Almost as an afterthought she relates that she expects to go to New York for three or four weeks to visit grandparents and aunts. It'll be her first trip to the Big Apple.

● JERMAINE SADLER is "sort of" looking forward to summer. A fifth grader in Ms. Bottoms' class, what Sadler likes best about summer is "no homework." In addition, "you can just sit and relax or go out and play with your friends." Stating that he won't miss school, this resident of E. Tenth St. doesn't have any other summertime plans.

● BRENT CHOWNING, of Kelford Lane, is a student in Ms. Stilwell's fourth grade. "We're going to the beach," he beams. Chowning, who has a seven-year-old brother, Mark, adds, "We might go to Carowinds. I like the roller coasters best."

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