

Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

March 2007

Advocates for Youth: An Innovative Approach to Reducing Teen Pregnancy

By Natasha Davis and Raynah Sivaraman



Cindy and her son Gabriel, 12

Cyndy Tan Jarabata has a hobby called Advocates for Youth that she began almost five years ago, in 2002. Her day job is planning, designing and launching boutique resorts like the latest one that has just been completed in Subic Bay – The Lighthouse Marina Resort – and she is the former General Manager of Bellevue Hotel in Alabang. The group of us who heard her speak at the February 19 Manila Women's Forum meeting were amazed that she can divide her energy between a demanding and exciting career and

managing an advocacy group for youth's rights to reproductive health.

Cyndy spoke to Manila Women's Forum about Advocates for Youth several years ago when the project was in its earlier stages. She was invited to give a talk again this February about the progress made by A4Y, an acronym for Advocates for Youth, and the new developments and innovative strategies that have made this advocacy group so successful. What she shared with us that evening was very interesting and impressive.

In the Philippines, more than one third of all women get pregnant before they are married. Thirty percent of all

(Continued on page 2)

Next MWF Meeting

When: 6:30 p.m. Monday 2007 March 19. **What:** Shana Montesol Johnson will speak about how to attain work/life balance and success through coaching. It will include hearing the experiences of someone who has benefited from coaching (our host!), a participatory exercise and a raffle of 3 free coaching sessions. **Where:** Christine Purka's house, 1661 Dasmariñas Avenue, Dasmariñas Village, Makati. **Bring:** Something to share for the potluck dinner (for 30). **March meeting:** Monday, 2007 April 16.

Club K answers queries of the yo

Newest teen portal launched in a free Valentine rock concert at U

Text and photos by
LEO ORTEGA LAPARAN II

Answers and explanations to frequently asked questions – from early pregnancy to gender discrimination – and more pertaining to teenage health and issues are now text messages and mouse clicks away.

Credit goes to CLUB K for bringing just the intended information – sans the malice and that awkward feeling – in a matter of seconds, made possible by short message service (SMS) and internet technologies. Club... what?

A ROCKING LAUNCH
Club K, which stands for Kabataan, Kalusugan, Karapatan, is the youth organization of the Advocates for Youth (A4Y) Philippines Foundation in partnership with Music Television (MTV), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and Wolfac Mobile, Inc., a subsidiary of Smart Communications, Inc., as its official service provider.

Last month, the newest teen portal was finally ingrained to the young public's senses as it sponsored a free pre-Valentine concert that went along with the launch of its SMS portal and website at the University of the Philippines Diliman's Bahay ng Alumnus.

Shaking the usually quaint



(Advocates... from page 1)
 births in the country are from women in the 15-19 age group. Seventy-four percent of all illegitimate births are from 15-19 year old mothers. In other words, one in four women by the age of 19 is already a mother in the Philippines. It is estimated that there are 400,000 induced abortions every year, and 36 percent are in the young women's group. These startling statistics are from the 2002 Young Adults Fertility Study.

A4Y is not about population control. Its purpose is to promote among the youth of the Philippines productive lives free from teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and HIV/AIDS that often devastate them, and to provide support and information that will enable them to make informed and smart decisions. To achieve its purpose, A4Y works with private corporations, schools, non-profit organizations and international institutions like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to address sexual health issues among the youth and propagate the message of "Sexual Responsibility."

Over the years, A4Y has organized numerous events in schools, road shows, symposia and other campaign programs that targeted youth, their parents and communities. In this way, it has reached out to over 30,000 young people with its spoken messages and with its flyers (such as Ten Reasons to Wait; Virginity is about Sexual Responsibility; He Says/She Says). In fact, it is one of the few organizations that have gained entrance into some Catholic schools in order to propagate its message of Sexual Responsibility. A4Y capitalizes on certain events like World Population Day; Scouts Day and MTV's World AIDS Day to promote its message. More importantly, it has also launched its own youth organization known as Club K to sustain its message of Sexual Responsibility and make it easily accessible to the youth, nationwide.

Club K was launched in February 2006 and stands for "Kabataan, Karapatan, Kalusugan" which means "youth's rights to reproductive health." Club K comprises youth

leaders and members. The leaders are generally recruited from among the winners of the annual essay competitions

organized by A4Y and who have shown both interest and commitment in spreading the message of sexual responsibility. They are trained to be spokespersons for responsible sexual behavior.

Club K now has its own website, with an on-line youth magazine called The Advocate, which is published once every two months. An SMS teen portal sends out text messages to members containing information on sex, pregnancy, STDs and HIV.

The on-line youth magazine has articles that cater to teenage tastes – like book and movie reviews, informative essays such as 7 Most Common Sexual Diseases, gender issues (He Says/She Says) on topics like "Would you give a cheating partner another chance?" which can be accessed on www.clubk.ph

Club K's SMS Teen Portal is the country's first and only youth health network on SMS. It is a subscription text messaging service available to Smart, Globe and Sun subscribers, with 15,000 members nationwide. To join, text ClubK and send to 2213. It provides Club K Facts on prevention of teenage pregnancies and sexual diseases, dating and relationships. Subscribers receive text messages every day such as: A sexual disease can be contracted in a single sexual encounter; or, Good sex may never
 (Continued on page 4)

ARE PINOY TEENS EMOTIONALLY READY FOR SEX?
 BY ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH

One of the deepest, most universal human aspirations is to have a healthy, loving relationship with someone and eventually enjoy a happy family life. These days, however, it is becoming increasingly apparent that many teens fast forward growing up by becoming sexually active, without the emotional maturity that should accompany such behavior. Just being knowledgeable about preventing pregnancy or a sexually-transmitted disease, or using contraceptives doesn't exactly prepare one for a sexual relationship. Teens first need to know themselves, who they are, what they want out of life, what gives them joy, what motivates them, what makes their spirit soar. Jumping into bed without being emotionally ready can often leave one full of confusion and regret. The average Filipino teen is thought to be more "conservative" than their Western counterpart; but in recent years, the number of teenage pregnancies has steadily been on the rise. What could be the cause of this alarming trend? And are Pinoy teens really emotionally ready for sex? We want to know what you think.

Advocates for Youth together with **meg** Magazine and Philippine Star urge the youth to join our essay-writing competition on the topic, "Is The Pinoy Youth Emotionally Ready for Sex?" Tell us if you think teenage life can be sex-free and still wonderful, if puppy love has been sexualized in our modern culture, if sex, for the fun-of-it could help a teenager to build healthy relationships; and, most importantly, if teenagers are emotionally ready for sex. Our evaluation of your essay will be based exclusively on your ability to support your views and opinions, even if they are daring and non-conservative.

Anti-teen Pregnancy Essay Writing Contest Mechanics:

- The essay-writing contest is open to young people ages 15-21.
- Essay should be in English, typewritten, double space format, with a minimum of 500 words and maximum of 800 words.
- Deadline of submission of entries is on November 10, 2006.
- Three entry winners shall be awarded: First Prize to receive P20,000 worth of prizes, Second Prize with P15,000 worth of prizes, and Third Prize with P10,000 worth of prizes. Consolation prizes will also be awarded to the next top 10 entries. The first prize winner will have their winning entry published in **meg** Magazine.

Criteria for Judging:

- Content and Substance - 40%
- Relevance to the theme - 30%
- Organization - 30%

All articles submitted will be used by Advocates for Youth Foundation for their research and information campaign to prevent early pregnancy, STD and HIV/AIDS in the Philippines.

Advocates for Youth (A4Y) envisions the youth to have a productive life free from early pregnancy, STD and HIV/AIDS by campaigning a national leadership that encourages healthy and responsible decisions among the youth. A4Y actively collaborates with private sector and media in recognizing the youth as the next generation accountable to the country's future.

Partners for Youth:
 UNFPA, THE PHILIPPINE STAR, meg

Submit your entries now and let the world know what you've got to say! Big prizes are in store!

Are Pinoy Teenagers Emotionally Ready for Sex?
 by Advocates for Youth

As teenagers enter a world of relationships and move towards adulthood, their lives appear to follow certain sequences like: "Sex-Parenthood-Marriage" or "Marriage-Sex-Parenthood" or "Sex-Marriage-Parenthood" or "Sex-Parenthood-No Marriage". Do they make a conscious choice? Do traditions, culture, religious values help them decide on the optimal sequence?

One of the deepest, most universal human aspirations is to have a healthy, loving relationship with a special person and to enjoy a happy family life. Yet, teenage experiences rarely propel teenagers towards fulfilling this aspiration. Teenagers are either unmotivated or misinformed about what it takes to build healthy relationships especially during teenage, and they fast-forward growing up by getting sexually active without the emotional maturity that should accompany such behavior.

Just being knowledgeable about preventing a pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease or using contraceptives, doesn't exactly prepare one for a sexual relationship. Teenagers need to know themselves, what they want out of life, what motivates them and makes their spirit soar. Till then, they are not emotionally mature.

Advocates for Youth launch their third essay-writing contest on the topic "Are Pinoy Teens Emotionally Ready for Sex?" Together with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), **meg** Magazine and Philippine Star, this choice of subject was determined by certain behavioral trends among youth that lead to teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, obsessions with body image and parentified in our modern culture? Is sex sometimes non-consensual or intimidating or peer-pressured? Does sex really help a girl to get her guy or a guy to stay faithful to his girl?

We look forward to hearing both voices, male and female, express their opinions: Our evaluation of your essay will be based exclusively on your ability to support your views and opinions, even if they are daring and non-conservative.

Advocates for Youth Essay Writing Mechanics:

- The essay-writing contest is open to young people ages 15-24.
- Essay should be in English, typewritten, double space format, with a minimum of 500 words and maximum of 800 words.
- Deadline of submission of entries is on November 10, 2006.
- The first three winners shall be awarded as follows: First Prize P20,000.00 worth of cash and prizes, Second Prize P15,000.00 worth of cash and prizes and Third Prize P10,000.00 worth of cash and prizes. Consolation prizes will also be awarded to the next top 10 entries.
- All entries should be sent to Advocates for Youth Foundation, 351 Batangas South St., Ayala Alabang Village, Alabang, Muntinlupa City 1780 or e-mail us at info@youthadvocates.net.
- Criteria for judging:
 - Relevance to the theme - 30%
 - Content and substance - 40%
 - Organization - 30%

Your views may be used by Advocates for Youth Foundation for their research and information campaign to prevent early pregnancy, STD and HIV/AIDS in the Philippines.

Submit your entries now and let the world know what you've got to say! Big prizes are in store!

Know more about yourself and your friends: social and sexual issues. Be heard in Club K's Forum, join the E-Pollstation or simply be courted in K-votes. Plus, invitation to special events, promos and win exciting prizes. So join now and log on to membership@www.clubk.ph

Support our Pinoy Youth and their rights to reproductive health! Text CLUBK to 2213 for Smart subscribers or Text CLUBK to 286 for Globe and Sun Cellular subscribers. For more details please contact us at (632) 807 17 08 and (632) 342 60 52. E-mail: info@youthadvocates.net. Website: www.youthadvocates.net

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Partners for Youth:
 UNFPA, THE PHILIPPINE STAR, meg

“Sex won’t make him yours, and a baby won’t make him stay.” *

This, I think, is simply one of the coolest ways to think about it. Here’s more, on teen pregnancy.



1 MAR 2007

KaWoMeNaN

Selected and edited by
Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is technically defined as occurring when women under the age of 20 become pregnant. In the United States, the term usually refers to girls who are younger than 18 years of age.

While the youngest mother on record is Lina Medina who gave birth to a boy at the age of five in 1939, most girls do not become fully fertile until much later. In the United States for example, the average age of menarche (first menstrual period) is 12.5 years and first ovulation occurs only irregularly until after this. The average age of menarche itself has been declining, and is continuing to do so. Whether fertility leads to early pregnancy depends on a number of factors, both societal and personal. Rates of teenage pregnancy worldwide range from 143 per 1000 in sub-Saharan Africa to 2.9 per 1000 in South Korea.

Pregnant teenagers face many of the same obstetrics issues as women in their 20s and 30s. However, there are additional medical concerns for younger mothers, particularly those under 15 and those living in developing countries. While age in itself is not a risk factor for mothers between 15 and 19, additional risks may be associated with socioeconomic factors.

Data supporting teenage pregnancy as a social issue in developed countries include lower educational levels, higher rates of poverty, and other poorer “life outcomes” in

children of teenage mothers. In developed countries on the other hand, teenage pregnancy is usually outside of marriage, and carries a social stigma in many communities and cultures. For these reasons, there have been many studies and campaigns which attempt to uncover the causes and limit the numbers of teenage pregnancies.

What the experts say

Experts in the area and other commentators have offered varying opinions on the root causes of teenage pregnancy.

According to Gill Francis of the National Children’s Bureau [in the U.K.], “There are four main reasons why girls in Britain become pregnant. We don’t give children enough information; we give them mixed messages about sex and relationships; social deprivation means girls are more likely to become pregnant; and girls whose mothers were teenage mums are more likely to do the same.”

On the other hand, U.K. fertility specialist Laurence Shaw has suggested that, despite the social stigma attached to teenage pregnancy, it is a natural biological adaptation to begin reproducing during the peak fertile period of the late teens and early twenties because this is the period of time when the fecundity rate (a measure of fertility) is at its highest, approaching 30%.

And then there is Gracie Hsu of the Family Research Council, who says that “contrary to the common perception that teenage sex and pregnancy typically stem from two teenagers getting caught up in the heat of the moment, new research reveals that many teenage girls are being sexually exploited and impregnated by adult men.” She also highlights family breakdown, fatherless families, lack of parental supervision, cultural influences, and erosion of legal protections such as statutory rape laws.

Public opinion

Opinion polls have also attempted to determine what some of the root causes of teenage pregnancy might be:

* Peer pressure: 76% of girls and 58% of boys in a 1996 Seventeen magazine survey reported that teenage females had sexual intercourse in

response to their boyfriend’s desire for it. A 2003 Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that among young men aged 15-17, one out of three said they had felt pressure from male friends to have sex.

* Contraceptive use: In a 1996 Kaiser Family Foundation study, 46% of adolescents surveyed said that they believed teenage pregnancy resulted from the failure to keep contraception at the ready. 23% of sexually active young women in the 1996 Seventeen magazine poll admitted to having had unprotected sex with a partner who eschewed the use of a condom. In a 1988 PARADE poll, 70% of girls claimed it was embarrassing to buy birth control or request information from a doctor.

* Parental relationship: 66% of girls in the 1997 PARADE survey said that the likelihood becoming pregnant as a teen increased if one had parents who were inattentive, unloving, or failed to instill moral values. A majority of respondents in a 1988 Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies survey attributed the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy to a breakdown of communication between parents and child, and also to inadequate parental supervision.

* Mass media: In the 1997 PARADE survey, 57% replied that sexualized content in film, 55% in television, and 44% in music helped to influence teenagers to engage in sexual activity before they are ready. A 1996 U.S. News & World Report poll, which asked about how television programs might contribute to the incidence of teenage pregnancy, found that 46% thought TV played a large role, 30% that it had some effect, 14% that it had little effect, 9% that it had none.

* Need to be loved: 36% in the 1997 PARADE survey said they believed that an adolescent might become pregnant to satisfy a desire for unconditional love. 24% said they believed that a girl might also become pregnant in an attempt to retain or win back a boyfriend.

(Adapted from Wikipedia)

Three good reasons to say No

Protect your feelings, protect your health, protect your future. *

* From “Our Story Our Words”
produced by The National Campaign
to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

(Advocates... from page 2)
assure you of a good relationship, but a good relationship will assure you of much more than just good sex; or, In the Philippines 7 out of 10 women have sex because they're in love with their partners, as compared to 3 out of 10 men who have sex because they're in love. Club K Fun gives interesting tips on beauty, dress, self-esteem, risky sexual behavior, having priorities, etc. Examples: Always say No to sex tapes. It's better to be safe than Paris Hilton; or, Absence makes the heart grow fonder but it can also make the fond heart wander.

Club K Text Messaging Portal also provides Club K FAQs. Example: Can I get pregnant standing up? (Answer: Yes you can!); or, When am I ready for sex? (Answer: You are ready for sex when you can take responsibility for its consequences and are in a relationship of mutual trust and commitment. **TEENAGERS ARE NOT READY FOR SEX**). A4Y also has a doctor on its team that can help deal with queries on STDs and medically related questions.

The reality is that young people look for answers to their questions from magazines, TV, the Internet and their friends. As a result, misconceptions abound as well as inaccuracies and myths about some of the basic facts about sex, contraception, relationships, sexual diseases and its preventive measures. Providing reliable information through text messages is an innovative and effective way of

raising awareness – and encouraging safer behavior among teens.

Club K has done a series of articles for the teen magazine Meg, while Advocates for Youth has also contributed articles (on dating rules for teens, teens going on out of town excursions, etc.) to Mommy Academy, a magazine for mothers.

A4Y continues to provide the “Prevent Teen Pregnancy” talk in schools. On September 8, 2006, A4Y went to Muntinlupa City School. Some of the students said teen pregnancy is especially a problem among those who are out of school and unable to find a job – for them, the only fun activity that doesn't cost money is sex. Of course that is only until the consequences catch up, but those who are young and uninformed are also not in a position to make good decisions. A4Y, in tandem with the city government, has been providing these teens with a two-week training course to prepare for the screening test to work in call centers.

A4Y keeps abreast of new information in the area of sexually transmitted diseases and preventative measures, such as the new vaccination for females aged 9-26 that provides immunity against contracting a virus that can lead to cervical cancer. It has recently been found that the spread of this virus cannot be prevented by using a condom.

Above all, A4Y has realized that it isn't enough to just promote the use of contraceptives to prevent teen pregnancies and sexual diseases. In fact, it is more important to inculcate the values of self-esteem (“I'm worth the

wait”) when promoting abstinence; focus on education first (“Don't rush growing up”); faithfulness in relationships (by discussing gender issues or stating that a universal need is to “enjoy a warm, loving relationship with someone special”); self-awareness (know who you are first so you pick the right partner); etc. As such, A4Y's message of sexual responsibility for the youth is well-rounded – it acknowledges that young people are sexual beings but with the ability to make informed, smart decisions that will improve the quality, purpose and health of their young lives. ■

The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Cecilia Leung**, Programs. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

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www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

MWF Newsletter
c/o Lisa Lumbao
26-B Casa Real Townhouse
Real St., Urdaneta Village
Makati City 1225