

NEWS RELEASE

May 6, 2008

Contact: Karen Terry

912.414.9851**“Choose Responsibly” Campaign Targets Teen Pregnancy**

Encouraging teens to make responsible choices – that’s the goal of a new billboard, poster and website campaign in Chatham, Effingham, Liberty and Bryan Counties as part of National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. The “Choose Responsibly” Campaign was developed by the Savannah College of Art and Design’s Agency 5, a student run advertising agency, for the PATHS Coalition. PATHS stands for Promoting Awareness of Teen Health and Sexuality, and is a collaboration of local agencies working to reduce teen pregnancy rates.

Every week in Chatham County, twelve teen girls find out they’re pregnant. For a teenager it can be devastating news with equally devastating repercussions. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school or get married, and more likely to end up on welfare. And the effects are felt throughout the community too. In 2004, teen childbearing cost taxpayers \$10 million in Chatham County alone.

“Many teens just don’t consider the long-term consequences of the decisions they make today about sex and contraception,” said Karen Terry, Youth Development Coordinator for the Coastal Health District and a PATHS Coalition member. “We’re hoping this campaign will help them make better, more responsible choices to protect their futures.”

The billboards feature photographs of area teens holding up signs with phrases like, “Dance class or Lamaze class?” and “Real Date or Play Date?” The posters carry statements such as, “What will you change first? Diapers or majors?”

The PATHS Coalition consulted with area teen groups to develop the theme for the campaign. “Who better to tell us how to present the message than teens themselves?” said Terry. PATHS then partnered with the students of Savannah College of Art and Design’s Agency 5 to develop the campaign materials, and used a grant from the United Way to help pay for the billboard space and printing costs. In addition, PATHS has added all the new campaign materials and resources to its website at www.talkingwithteens.com. The site also features a new “Ask the Expert” section to allow teens a safe and secure way to get answers to their questions about sex, pregnancy, contraception and STDs.

Wednesday, May 7th is the National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and teens are encouraged to take the “National Day Quiz,” developed by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. The online quiz challenges teens with different scenarios about sex, relationships & pregnancy and asks them to answer honestly, "What would you do?" Teens are invited to visit the Midtown Clinic of the Chatham County Health Department, the Bull Street Library, or the Long County Health Department on Wednesday from 3-5 p.m. to take the quiz.

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