

CLARK COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT SPONSORS "TEEN FAIR 92" TO EDUCATE THE TEEN PUBLIC

By Muhammad Abdullah
In an effort to inform teenagers and other young people about the dangers of "sexually transmitted diseases" (STD) the Clark County Health District sponsored a four-hour "Teen Fair 92" at Shadowlawn in its field office on Saturday, February 29, 1992.

The "Teen Fair 92" drew hundreds of teens and other youths as well as many parents and concerned persons who took the time out to visit the numerous "public information" booths and pick-up brochures, pamphlets and of course, condoms to encourage those youths who will not practice abstinence, the safest method, to at least protect themselves from contracting AIDS and becoming HIV positive as well as other sexually transmitted diseases (i.e., venereal disease (VD), gonorrhea, herpes, chlamydia etc.)

According to Rubie Lucas, one of the coordinators of the event who spoke to this SENTINEL-VOICE about the objectives of the Fair, "It is the first of its kind that has been sponsored by the Health District. Our goal is to first let our teens know where they can get help should they contact any (STD), also we don't want to encourage them to have sex, but if they are sexually active, we want them to be aware of the dangers and supply them with condoms so that they can protect themselves."

THE NAACP AND YOU

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you deem it necessary.

As soon as we receive their responses we will pass them on to you.

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When asked about some of the activities that would be taking place at the Fair, Lucas responded this way: "We have several booths with representatives from the Health District to handout literature and answer questions about their respective areas. We have an AIDS clinic booth, we have a booth for High Blood Pressure screening on nutrition, a booth on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD), we have a Cholesterol Screening clinic, we have High Blood Pressure testing clinic, and we have some "Rap" groups. Under Pressure Productions is here, we have some prominent people; Rev. Richard Steel, Frank Hawkins is expected, Mr. Jordan from Senator Bilbray office, and others. We have some staff members from KCEP, doing a "live remote."

"We want our young people to know that they are not invincible and that you do not have to be gay or homosexual in order to contract the HIV virus. What happened to Magic Johnson says to our young people that it can happen to anybody. We hope they get the message that we are trying to get to them. And if this "Fair" is successful, we hope to hold a "Fair" at least once a year or twice a year if we have to," she said.

The SENTINEL-VOICE went inside and interviewed some of the booth representatives and other participants. We asked

what they hoped would be accomplished from the "Teen Fair" and to discuss some of the myths concerning the AIDS virus as well as what "impact" did the announcement by Magic Johnson have on their "sexual behavior."

Rev. Richard Steel of Calvary Southern Baptist Church responded this way. "This is a "life" and "death" situation. If they are going to have sex, they should have "safe sex." They should not be participating in sex at all, that's what I teach my kids and any other kid that would listen to me; that they should not part-take in sex at all, but if they do to get educated.

Cynthia Ferguson of KCEP 88.1FM radio said that they were "pumping up" public service announcements all week for the "Fair."

There is a lot of information available today. Blood Pressure Testing, how to acquire Pre-natal Testing for Teen Pregnancy, safe sex, being a Teen Parent. There is a wealth of information available today," she said.

"I just hope that the "Fair" today would open up their eyes so that they can see what's really going on out there. AIDS has no discrimination and it happens to a lot of people."

Carolyn Seward, a Senior Clerk at the Health District in the STD Clinic had this to say. "Our motivation here is to get younger people aware of the Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Health, and Nutrition. It seems to be a good turnout so far."

Julie Craig, a Public Health Nurse at the District said that one of the biggest myths is that you cannot get AIDS from the first time experimenting with sex. Craig said that the HIV virus can remain undetected in the system for up to ten (10) years. We have to get parents aware that you must talk to your children. Just because they say that they are not doing it, does not mean that it is not happening. mother



Teenagers from throughout the Valley came out to participate and receive various information in the first Teen Health Fair.

Photos by Savoy/LVS-Voice

and father, be aware, something is going on!

Ann Black, a clerk with the Health District had this to say when responding to the question about Magic Johnson's announcement. "They are definitely showing up to be tested since he announced," she said.

"They do mention the fact that "Magic" contracted the HIV and he is heterosexual, so they are concerned."

Babbett Bond, a Public Information Specialist with the Health District and one of the coordinators of the project had this to say, "We know that there are a lot of teens that need information about their health, but they don't like to come to the clinic to ask for it, a lot of time, just the building is intimidating, and they also

think that they know everything, and that they are going to live forever. So it's real hard to get them to come in and get help," she said. Bond also gave the SENTINEL-VOICE some startling news. She said that within the last year there have been 40 (forty) cases of babies born in Clark County with the HIV virus. She said that 1/3 of those infants will develop HIV positive by 2 years.

One parent Mary Wilson, who brought her teenage son and several grandchildren said, "It's one thing to tell them to restrain themselves and it is another thing to deal with the reality of the situation and so I'm making sure they have safe sex by storing up on condoms."

Shirley Varkas, a dietitian at

St. Rose De Lima Hospital said that they were on hand to educate the teens on proper nutrition and how to keep their babies healthy.

Lionel Starks, with the Health District's HIV AIDS Team said that there has been a significant increase in the number of screenings for HIV. "Before Magic Johnson's announcement, we were doing, on an average of 20 people a day. That's a 300% increase," he said

Safe sex seems to be what most teens were echoing, according to those who the SENTINEL-VOICE interviewed. However, the fact remains, that most health specialist, parents, clergy and teens interviewed stressed that "ABSTINENCE" is 100% safe.

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