So Young People Grow Up Healthy: TAKE FLIGHT 2016 Raises over $35,000

SHIFT NC is so grateful to our sponsors and guests at Take Flight with SHIFT NC’s fundraiser, auction and benefit that took place on September 17th at the Millennium Hotel in Durham.

Together we raised over $35,000 to help young people in our state grow up healthy! Take Flight with SHIFT NC fundraiser, auction and benefit builds capacity of SHIFT NC’s work to ensure all North Carolina young people have access to quality sexuality education and teen friendly health care and ensures young people have a powerful advocate for their sexual health and well-being.

SHIFT NC creates community mobility through a sexual health lens by building capacity of North Carolina communities to reduce adolescent pregnancy and improve adolescent sexual health. Investing in young people’s sexual health benefits them, our state, and our communities now and in the future.

Thank you from SHIFT NC
Parents are the first and most important sexual health educators in their children’s lives. However, not all parents are comfortable with or have the resources to discuss sexual health with their children.

Each year, SHIFT NC sponsors Let’s Talk Month in October as an opportunity for parents and children to learn to better communicate in an open and honest manner about sexual health.

“We believe parents want to talk to their children about sex, but many parents don’t always know where to start,” said Janeen Gingrich, Interim CEO at SHIFT NC, adding, “Let’s Talk Month is designed to support parents in becoming an ‘askable’ parent and a powerful influence on their children’s lifelong health.”

Families play a pivotal role in helping young people make healthy decisions about sex. A series of age-appropriate conversations over many years provides opportunities for parents and their children to explore the many aspects of sexual health within the context of their values in their own home.

**Talking About Sexual Health Matters!**

**Why Talk About Sex?**

Whether children are 2 or 22, what adults say can play a role in how healthy, safe, and responsible they are for the rest of their lives.

Talking to children will help them:

- Appreciate and respect their own bodies.
- Protect themselves from peer pressure, abuse, or coercion.
- Delay sex until they are older and ready.
- Avoid getting pregnant or causing a pregnancy.
- Talk to doctors, partners, and other adults about sex, safety, and boundaries.

**Communication Tips**

Afraid it will be awkward? It will be. But 87% of teens say they could more easily delay sex if they could have open, honest conversations with their parents about it.

**Messages Worth Repeating**

- All of us are growing and changing throughout our lives.
- Everyone develops in his/her own way.
- Your way is unique and special and valid.
- Everybody’s body is private and deserves respect.
- Sexuality is a beautiful gift—something to be handled wisely.

**Beyond “The Talk”**

It can be helpful to think beyond the stereotypical one-and-done conversation about where babies come from. Children learn more from real-life situations than hypothetical situations, so look to media, popular culture and everyday life to start your next conversation.
While North Carolina’s teen pregnancy rate has dropped to historic lows, some youth are still at higher risk — and many youth at higher risk have key needs.

Studies show that:
- Youth in foster care are more likely to experience a teen pregnancy.
- Justice-involved youth take more sexual risks: they are younger at first intercourse, have a higher number of sexual partners and report lower rates of condom use.

Every Teen Counts is a signature initiative of SHIFT NC designed to boost the capacity of key systems to help foster care and justice-involved youth avoid unplanned pregnancy.

Building Capacity
The primary goal of Every Teen Counts is to help North Carolina’s foster care and juvenile justice systems build capacity to help youth avoid unplanned pregnancy. In addition, nearly 1,400 of the state’s highest risk youth will receive evidence-based programs, and professionals across the state will benefit from lessons learned about improving health outcomes for these underserved youth.

Best Practice Approach
The Every Teen Counts initiative works directly with social service agencies and juvenile detention centers to implement best practice teen pregnancy prevention approaches and evidence-based programs. We also work at the systems level so that these best practice approaches and programs are more sustainable.

Trauma-Informed Prevention
We strive to meet the unique needs of foster care and justice-involved youth. In addition, we provide training, technical assistance, and coaching on trauma-informed prevention to local partners.

Elevating Voices of Young People: Adolescent Health Advocacy Day 2017

Since 1991 SHIFT NC has convened community partners across the state to host Adolescent Health Advocacy Day (AHAD). This event provides North Carolina young people with a powerful voice to stand up for their own health. Teens across our state prioritize up to four health topics that matter most and adult leaders provide skills for effective communication on why those topics matter.

On March 7, 2017, up to 300 youth will convene at the North Carolina Museum of History to share priority health issues with legislative leaders. Adolescent Health Advocacy Day elevates the voices of North Carolina’s youth to have a powerful impact in decisions made at the legislative level.

SHIFT NC’s Commitment to All Youth

SHIFT NC is committed to building a North Carolina where all young people group up healthy, including vulnerable youth. We often use the word “vulnerable” to describe marginalized youth because they typically face higher levels of adversity. This adversity—for example, a history of trauma, homelessness, or lack of adult supporters—can complicate the transition to adulthood and put them at risk for social and financial hardship.

Vulnerable youth include those impacted by the foster care and juvenile justice systems. We aim to ensure that the programs we support reach vulnerable youth in North Carolina—in fact, many of our initiatives specifically target young people impacted by these systems.

Youth in foster care are more likely to experience a teen pregnancy. Teen girls in foster care become pregnant by the age of 19 at a rate 2.5 times higher than that of their peers not in care, and nearly half of teen boys in foster care had gotten someone pregnant by age 21. Children born to teens in foster care are themselves at higher risk for child welfare involvement.

We also know that youth involved in the juvenile justice system take more sexual risks. They are younger at first intercourse, have a higher number of sexual partners, and report lower rates of condom use.

Through SHIFT NC’s initiatives, teens in foster care and juvenile detention are receiving evidence-based programs in communities across the state to reduce teen pregnancy and HIV/STI infection.
After enrolling at UNC Chapel Hill, I was selected to join SHIFT NC’s Teen Health Now group - a former youth leadership program that taught young people how to use their voices to make a difference with policies that affect teen health, adolescent education and, in particular, teens rights to healthcare. In fact, in 2009, our voices had such a tremendous effect that the Healthy Youth Act was passed that now allows school districts all across our state to teach comprehensive sexual health education.

I was determined to make sure there was at least one less teen that had to go through what I had to go through. One less teen that had to grow up before their time. One less teen without a voice.

Teen Health Now gave me a powerful voice at a time when I needed it the most. It helped me to see that my voice mattered. So, after finishing up my degree in economics at UNC in just 3 years, I decided to attend UNC School of Law in the hopes of making sure my voice was heard in an even more profound way. And I am happy to report that after three long years, and one extremely daunting bar exam, I will officially be sworn-in this October.

My journey is not over yet. It is just beginning. My voice mattered then, and programs like these helped me feel like I could accomplish anything that I set my mind to. With the birth of my daughter, my goal became one less.

Today, my goal is one more. One more teen with a voice. Young people have a powerful voice and when we invest in them early, we inspire a vision that they are powerful, extraordinary, and worth protecting.

Invest in powerful voices of North Carolina’s young people by supporting SHIFT NC’s 2017 Adolescent Health Advocacy Day. Donate today at shiftnc.org.

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