



OAH TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM: SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS

Mary Black Foundation: *Connect*

In July 2015, the HHS Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) awarded 84 Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program grants. The Mary Black



Foundation's *Connect* initiative aims to reduce the rate of teen births in Spartanburg County, SC by 20% by 2020. *Connect* targets youth residing in zip codes with high rates of teen childbearing, as well as vulnerable youth in foster care, parenting teens, and youth involved with the Department of Juvenile Justice and/or law enforcement.

From 2010 - 2015, Spartanburg County was part of a joint OAH/CDC community-wide teen pregnancy prevention initiative. Spartanburg experienced a 47% decline in the teen birth rate, surpassing the progress made by neighboring communities and marking the first time that the county's rate was below that of the state. The Mary Black Foundation is using the current OAH funding to expand the community's capacity to build on that success.

About the Mary Black Foundation's *Connect* Initiative

The Mary Black Foundation is an independent grant making organization focused on improving the health and wellness of the people and communities of Spartanburg County, SC. They play a leadership role in a number of community collaborations, including *Connect*—their OAH-funded initiative to reduce teen pregnancy. *Connect* partners with local adolescent-serving agencies in Spartanburg County to build their capacity to implement evidence-based programs as well as to promote adolescent-friendly services and supports. A wide variety of community stakeholders are engaged including health care service providers, schools, faith communities, non-profit organizations, state agencies, law enforcement, employers, teen advocates, and community health workers.

- In 2015, the Mary Black Foundation was awarded a grant from the HHS Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program to implement a coordinated, community-based teen pregnancy prevention program.
- The Mary Black Foundation collaborates with community partners to implement several evidence-based programs: *Adult Identity Mentoring (Project AIM)*, *Love Notes*, *Making a Difference!*, *Making Proud Choices!*, *Nu-Culture Sexual Health and Adolescent Risk Prevention (SHARP)*, and *Seventeen Days*.
- Through a Community Advisory Group and Youth Leadership Council, the Mary Black Foundation actively engages youth and adults in the community to prevent teen pregnancy.

"It's actually helped me as a parent just really build on what I can do in my own home for my kids and the direction that we are going....It is really helping me embrace the community as a health educator."

- imatter, Health educator



The Connect Youth Ambassador Team

“Connect provides teenagers with the resources they need to make positive choices. It gives a solid foundation for them to lean on during tough times and hard decisions.”

- Senior at Brynes High School

Why It Matters?

The OAH TPP Program and the Mary Black Foundation’s *Connect* initiative are important investments in reducing the rates of teen pregnancy. The work that *Connect* does:

- **Addresses Disparities in the Teen Birth Rate.** Although the overall teen birth rate in Spartanburg County declined 47% from 2010 to 2015, disparities persist for certain zip codes and sub-populations, such as African-American teens and older teens. By focusing on the communities with the greatest need, the *Connect* initiative is making a larger impact on teen pregnancy prevention.
- **Serves a Community Need.** Prior to the creation of the *Connect* initiative, there was a lack of after school programs for middle school students in the areas being served. The *Connect* initiative developed strong partnerships that have expanded and enhanced efforts to serve vulnerable youth with evidence-based interventions at middle schools and clinics and positive youth development programming at community partner sites in schools and recreational facilities.

- **Links Youth to a Wide Range of Youth-Friendly Services.** With the guidance and support of their Community Advisory Board, *Connect* launched an online resource guide and referral system: connectspartanburg.org. The online resource makes it easier for youth and parents to identify a wide range of youth-friendly services offered in the community, from vocational and workforce development opportunities to education about healthy relationships and intimate partner violence, as well as sexual health services. The online referral system allows agencies serving vulnerable youth to connect them to these important educational programs, services, and supports.

Connect By the Numbers

- National Teen Birth Rate (2015): 22.3 per 1,000 females age 15-19;
- South Carolina Teen Birth Rate (2015): 26.1 per 1,000 females age 15-19;
- Spartanburg County Teen Birth Rate (2015): 24.9 per 1,000 females age 15-19;
- Teen Birth Rate for targeted zip codes (2013*): 42.7 per 1,000 females age 15-19.

**reflects the most recent year for which data are available.*

“By increasing communication between youth-serving organizations Connect is creating a network of non-profits working collaboratively to provide support resources for adolescents and families. I believe that holistically looking at the needs of our teens is critical for reducing disparities and promoting positive outcomes.”

- Taylor Dockter, Drug Free Communities Project Coordinator

For more information or to schedule a site visit, contact:
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About the Office of Adolescent Health TPP Program

The OAH [Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah) is a national, evidence-based program that funds diverse organizations working to prevent teen pregnancy across the United States. OAH invests in the implementation of programs identified as evidence-based by the HHS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review, and provides funding to develop and evaluate new and innovative approaches to prevent teen pregnancy.