



Helping Teens Learn to Parent

Heather Spivey July 7, 2016. Posted in [Community & Non-Profit](#), [Current Issue](#), [Parenting](#)

The Northwest Area Health Education Center (a program of the Wake Forest School of Medicine) and the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center Pediatrics Department teamed up on May 20th and hosted a free event at the Bridger Field House for professionals and others who support pregnant and parenting teens, as well as several pregnant and parenting teens themselves, in an effort to help young parents and their children to build healthy families.

There were 15 teen parents or grandparents (parents of the teens) in attendance, along with 78 professionals from 22 organizations, who all discussed support of pregnant and parenting teens using a modified World Café method. Some of the organizations included: Forsyth Adolescent Health Coalition, the Wake Forest Baptist Health Department of Pediatrics, the Forsyth County Department of Public Health, **Imprints Cares**, Northwest AHEC, the Wake Forest Clinical and Translational Science Institute, and Young Lives.

Dr. Katie Plax, MD, was the guest speaker for the event. Dr. Plax is the Director of the Division of Adolescent Medicine in the Department of Pediatrics at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. She is also the Medical Director of The SPOT (Supporting Positive Opportunities with Teens), a program developed in 2008 to address the serious risks facing youth ages 13–24 in the St. Louis region. The SPOT program provides a range of confidential services through a one-stop, drop-in-center model that includes medical and reproductive health care, sexually transmitted disease screening and treatment, mental health advice and other social and prevention services.

The goal of this event was to highlight and identify clinical and educational resources, as well as support services for pregnant and parenting teens in Forsyth County. The concerns and challenges that pregnant and parenting teens face, as well as opportunities to build on strengths in our community, were also addressed.

Coordinator with Young Lives organization, Julie Bell, had a brief Q&A with a 19-year old teen mother (Jennifer) who attended the event with her boyfriend Ty (age 20), along with their 3-year-old and newborn after the program to get her thoughts and share her experience.

1. **Julie:** What was it like for you, as a teen parent, to be able to share your ideas and insights with a table of professionals and other adults who work with teen parents?

Jennifer: *It was a great experience, because for once you could give professionals advice for what it is that we really need as teen parents and [on] prevention for teen pregnancy.*

2. **Julie:** What is one thing you really hope they heard/learned from you?

Jennifer: *One thing I really hope they learned was my idea for prevention for teen pregnancies, which was having teen parents as such go and talk one day to kids in high school in one of their sex education courses and tell them what it's really like to be a parent at such a young age. Tell them what is real life—just give them a reality check, but in a good way, not a rude awakening.*

3. **Julie:** What, if anything, did you gain from the experience?

Jennifer: *I gained knowledge on the fact that there are plenty of other programs that are advocates for teen moms. I also learned that I wish I would have known when I was younger when I had my first child at 16. Everything was hard, and those resources they presented to me that day would have made a difference to me.*

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