



The Choctaw Sun
Friday, January 12, 2007
Page 4A

Lifestyles

www.choctawsun.com
choctawsun@millry.net

Risky behavior

■Teens in state, county exhibiting dangerous behavior problems

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — They know it's risky, but they're doing it anyway.

In record numbers, teens are choosing to engage in behavior that could have dire consequences. From sexual activity at younger ages to choosing multiple partners at ages as young as 14, teens are ignoring repeated warnings from a variety of sources and the open availability of information from schools, parents, and the media — and they are choosing to take the risks.

Although some statistics show declines in numbers of teen pregnancies in some areas, teens in Alabama — and in Choctaw County — are exhibiting risky behavior in higher numbers.

According to the School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS), teens in Alabama have higher rates of such problems than the overall national rates.

For example, the study cites that among students in 9-12 grades, 58.2% of Alabama females admitted to having already engaged in sexual activity at least once. Nationally, the numbers stand at 42.9%.

For boys, 55.7% of Alabama teens have had sex, while the statistics show about 48.5% nationally.

Even more frightening is that over 18% of teenage girls in Alabama who are younger than age 18 say that they have had four or more partners, compared to 11.4% nationally. For males, the number climbs to 23% in the state and 17.2% for the nation as a whole.

But Alabama teens are less likely to become sexually active because of alcohol or drug use. Among those who are sexually active, 16.1% of the state's females say they used drugs of alcohol prior to having sex, compared to 20.7% nationally. For boys, the numbers are 23.4% for the state, and 30.9% for the U.S. as a whole.

Not only are teens choosing to engage in sexual behavior more often, they are also ignoring the availability of contraception and protection against diseases.

The study shows that Alabama teens ages 15-19 have a pregnancy rate of 54.5 per 1,000 population, while nationally, the numbers stand at 43 per 1,000. During each day in Alabama in 2004, there were 22.6 births to teenagers.

Behavior contracts for teens

GILBERTOWN — Parents of teens often find it difficult to monitor and control teen behavior effectively. Whether the bad behavior is simply being disrespectful or not performing well in school, or serious enough to be life-threatening, parents can use all the help they can get to address the problems.

Some experts promote the use of Teen Behavior Contracts. These formal written agreements on behavior expectations between the teen and the parent or school counselor offer advantages that may make it easier.

Behavior contracts have several advantages for teens and their parents. For teens, they make both the rules and the consequences of breaking the rules clear and unmistakable. For parents, behavior contracts can help them to be consistent with rules and discipline, and provide an opportunity to talk with their teens about important subjects such as drugs and alcohol, dating, and driving.

According to most experts who promote the contracts, the documents need several components:

- A clear description of the good behavior expected from the teen
- What the positive consequences of the behavior will be
- What the negative consequences of not performing the specific behavior will be
- What the adults involved are expected to do
- A clear plan to help the teen achieve the good behavior
- A place for the signatures of the teen and adults involved

Some areas that may be covered

by teen behavior contracts include:

- Performance or behavior at school
- Behavior at home, including treatment of other family members, language, or doing chores
- Curfews
- Driving privileges
- Dating
- Clothing, tattoos, piercings, and other appearance issues
- Cell phone use or bill payment
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol
- Extracurricular activities or how free time is spent

Consequences of breaking the conditions of the behavior contract should be clearly stated in the contract, and should be appropriate to the situation. Parents must be consistent in enforcing consequences or behavior contracts are ineffective. Consequences could include one or more of the following:

- No driving
- No dating or free time with friends
- No cell phone or phone privileges
- No television or computer
- Loss of allowance
- Writing an apology
- Writing a report about the rule that was broken and why it is important

Parents can make their own teen behavior contracts, get one from a teacher or counselor, or buy them from companies that provide contracts. There are also a few websites that have very simple outlines that can be downloaded free of charge.

(Information from *Teenagers Today* magazine).

According to the state Department of Public Health, there were 7,903 births to young girls age 10-19 in Alabama in 2005. Thirty-one pregnancies were reported among that age group in Choctaw County, with 23 live births, 2 abortions, and 6 miscarriages.

Teens in Alabama also have higher rates of positive HIV cases. According to the most recent surveillance reports, Alabamians over age 13 in the state have a rate of about 158 per 100,000 population. Nationally, the rate is 127.8 per 100,000.

Contrarily, the data shows that about 106 per 100,000 Alabamians have developed AIDS, while the number stands at 167 per 100,000 nationally.

Chlamydia is the most commonly reported sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the state, with 218 females per 100,000 in the U.S. and 53 males per 100,000 being diagnosed with it.

The overall rate among women is about three times higher than that of men.

Gonorrhea is second, followed by syphilis. In fact, in the U.S., females age 15-19 had the highest rates of gonorrhea compared to any age other group. Totally, there were 26 cases of gonorrhea per 100,000 males and 39.1 per 100,000 females in the U.S.

Reports for genital herpes and other STD's were not available.

The most recent available records show that Choctaw County had 28 cases of Chlamydia, 7

gonorrhea, and 1 case of syphilis. There were no cases of AIDS or HIV reported in the county.

WHAT IS ALABAMA DOING ABOUT IT?

According to the School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS), the state requires that some issues be addressed by public schools, but the matter is often controversial. HIV Prevention is often mandated to be taught in elementary, middle, and high school, as is STD prevention in general.

Pregnancy prevention and sexuality teaching is not typically required.

According to the SHPPS data, over 42% of schools in the country collect data on sexual activity of students (including 10.9% of elementary schools), 48.6% record numbers of pregnancies, and 54.4% collect data on STD and HIV cases.

In addition to collecting data, about 64% of all schools surveyed provide information to students on relationship and risk factors involved in dating, teen pregnancy, and multiple sex partners.

Although it is often controversial, about 68% of schools share information about contraception with students, including

33.6% of schools teaching the correct use of condoms.

But while schools can take measures to communicate to teens about the dangers of risky behavior, experts agree that the real key to changing such behavior is parental control.

In fact, many parents are not comfortable with schools giving their children information about such topics as contraception and sexual activity. While some schools do so within the boundaries of what many parents consider acceptable, there have been cases throughout the nation where parents have taken on the school system over what they consider a violation of their rights as parents to teach their children as they see fit.

In many cases, the issue is not just about parental authority. It is an issue of religious and moral decisions that many families believe lie within their own rights to address.

But whether it is up to the schools or the parents to address risky behavior among teens, data shows that, in many cases in Alabama and in Choctaw County, attempts to do so may not be working.

FYI about Alabama teens

In 2005:
Youngest bride: 14; youngest groom: 16
Youngest male divorced: 17; female: 16
Youngest father in Alabama last year was 14.
Youngest mother was 11.

Obituaries

Cecile Esther Odom Strickland

MERIDIAN, Miss. — Graveside services for Cecile Esther Odom Strickland were held Jan. 7, 2007 at Andrews Chapel Cemetery.

Mrs. Strickland, 103, of Meridian, was born at Womack Hill, Ala. — the daughter of Benjamin Franklin Odom and his wife, Jessie Ona Campbell — and died Jan. 4 at Queen City Nursing Home. She was employed as a seamstress and was a member of 5th Street Methodist Church.

Her great-great grandfather, Rev. William Campbell, was a pioneer Baptist minister in Choctaw Co., and Clarke Co., Ala., having served as pastor of Black Creek Baptist Church (Silas), Mt. Sterling Baptist Church, Bladon Springs Baptist Church, Ucanush Baptist Church (Coffeeville) and several others.

Survivors include two daughters, Lois Belvin of Meridian, and Sarah Miller and her husband, Alden, of Tulsa, OK.; six grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by three daughters, Annie Ruth Potocnak, Katie Merle Wallace and Adele Sanders, and one son, Samuel H. Brewer, Jr.

Linda Pearl Beasley Boykin

BRANCH — Services for Linda Pearl Beasley Boykin, 44, were held Jan. 10, 2007 from the chapel of Phillips Funeral Home in Gilberttown with Rev. Fred Wiley and Rev. Ronald Hobby officiating. Interment was in the Brightwater Cemetery.

Mrs. Boykin died on Jan. 8 at Wayne General Hospital in Waynesboro, Miss.

Survivors include her husband, Conny Boykin of Branch; her mother Elizabeth Odom Beasley of Waynesboro, MS; three sons Conny Lee (wife, Donna Marie) Boykin of Waynesboro, Donnie (wife, Alisia Margaret) Boykin of Frankville, and John Ray (wife, Tara Elizabeth) Boykin of Silas; one daughter, Belinda Ann (husband, Jeremiah) Presley of Needham; two brothers Billy Beasley of Buckatunna, MS and Sonny Weaver of Texas; six sisters, Brenda Lewis of Clara, MS, Judy Louise Dearmon, Debbie Tyson, and Pamela Dearmon all of Aquilla, and Mary Jean Hartley and Mary Ann Holly, both of Waynesboro; and eleven grandchildren.

Mrs. Boykin was preceded in death by her father Jessie Elmer Beasley, one brother Bobby Eugene Beasley and one sister Lisa Dearmon.

Pallbearers were Ronnie Johnson, Marvin Singley, Adam McDowell, Andy Kennett, Clifton Scoggins, Jeff Beasley, Heath Shirley, and Eric Lewis.

Phillips Funeral Home in Gilberttown was in charge of the arrangements.

Charlie Ed Smith

BUTLER — Services for Charlie Ed Smith, 47, were held on Jan. 9, 2007 at Butler Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church with Rev. Patrick H. Burke and Rev. Willie Vines officiating. Interment followed in the church cemetery.

Mr. Smith was born June 24, 1959 to the late Clyde D. and Ida Jean Smith. He received his education at Choctaw County High School. At an early age he joined the Butler Chapel C.M.E. Zion Church and was employed by the Choctaw Advocate for 20 years. Smith was preceded in death by his parents and one sister, Geneva Smith Williams.

Survivors include two daughters, Charmagne and Sheyanna Smith, both of Montgomery; four brothers, Clyde (wife, Minnie) Smith of Monroeville, Norman (wife, Sandra) Smith of Madison, Douglas (wife, Louise) Smith of Colorado Springs, CO, and Billy Smith, of Butler; one sister, Rebell (husband, Michael) Goodwin, of Birmingham; one brother-in-law Fred Williams, of Birmingham; grandmother, Rebell Horn, of Mobile; one aunt, Mattie (husband, Son) Capers of Pennington; a nephew, Martel (wife, Benita) Smith, of Birmingham and other relatives and friends.

Pallbearers were members of the Choctaw County High School Class of 1979.

Southwest Alabama Funeral Services, Inc. was in charge of the arrangements.

Miriam Vermell Gunnels

TOXEY — Services for Miriam Vermell Gunnels, 74, of Toxey, were held Jan. 9, 2007 at Bumpers Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Doug Chapman and Rev. Rebecca Harper officiating. Interment followed in Bonner Cemetery.

Born Oct. 12, 1932 at Land, Ala., she died on Jan. 7th at Rush Foundation Hospital in Meridian, MS. She was a retired seamstress.

Survivors include two sisters, Beatrice Robinson, of Needham and Carol Manley of Pennington; three brothers, William Gunnels (wife, Marie), of Toxey, Winston Gunnels, of Toxey, and Gerald Gunnels (wife, Susan), of Cartersville, GA; and nieces and nephews.

Pallbearers were Terry Robinson, Samuel Robinson III, Sidney Gunnels, Joey Gunnels, Jimmy Graham, Randall Manley, Jeremy Manley, and William Skinner. Honorary pallbearers were William "Bubba" Gunnels, Johnny Gunnels, Travis Gunnels, and Greg Manley.

Bumpers Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.

Virginia McKeller Boykin

MONROEVILLE — Virginia McKeller Boykin, a native of Frankville and a resident of Monroeville,

See DEATHS, page 4B

About the Sun:

**PUBLISHED TWICE WEEKLY
On Tuesdays and Fridays**

Deadlines:

For Tuesday issues: **Fridays** at noon
For Friday issues: **Wednesdays** at noon
(Early deadlines may apply to weeks that contain holidays)

Subscription Rates:

In Choctaw Co \$30 + \$2.40 tax = \$32.40
(Senior Citizens ... \$18 + \$1.44 tax = \$19.44
Elsewhere in Alabama ... \$35 + \$2.80 tax = \$37.80
Other states ... \$45 (no tax)

ePaper internet subscriptions are available with any subscription for an additional fee of \$10

Visit us at two locations:

GILBERTOWN OFFICE:
13440 Choctaw Ave.
Gilbertown, AL
Phone: (251) 843-6397

Toll-free:
(800) 838-4SUN
Fax: (251) 843-3233

OFFICE HOURS:
Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

BUTLER OFFICE:
214 West Smith Street
(Next door to May, Evans
and Newton Law Office)
Butler, AL

Phone: (205) 459-2461
Fax: (205) 459-3047

OFFICE HOURS:
Mon., Tues., Thurs. &
Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Send U.S. Mail to:

P.O. Box 269
Gilbertown, AL 36908-0269



Send Emails to:

choctawsun@millry.net

Visit us online at:

www.choctawsun.com

POSTMASTER: THE CHOCTAW SUN (USPS number 022-326) is published twice-weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays by The Choctaw Sun, 13440 Choctaw Avenue, P.O. Box 269, Gilbertown, AL 36908. Periodicals postage paid at Gilbertown, AL 36908. **Send change of address to: The Choctaw Sun, P.O. Box 269, Gilbertown, AL 36908-0269.**

ENTIRE CONTENT OF THE CHOCTAW SUN
PROTECTED BY US COPYRIGHT LAWS. ALL RIGHTS
RESERVED. ©2007 The Choctaw Sun

Choctaw County's Award-Winning Home-Owned Newspaper