



## **4-H T.G.I. F. Brings In Over a Million Dollars**

This year the 4-H T.G.I. F. (Teens Getting Involved for the Future) program received \$103,752 in grant money bringing the 14 year total to \$1,326,747. Currently this money provides employment for nine Extension educators to implement the program in seven counties: Choctaw, Conecuh, Elmore, Hale, Marion, Tuscaloosa and Sumter. Over the program's lifetime 29 jobs have been created.

4-H T.G.I.F. is an Extension community, school-based abstinence education program funded by the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program.

The grant writing team and project directors Elaine Alberson, County Extension Coordinator, Choctaw County (retired), and Denise Shirley, County Extension Coordinator, Hale County created the program in 1994 based on needs in their rural West Alabama counties and upon advisement of their County Extension Advisory Boards.

4-H T.G.I.F is based on the *Managing Pressures Before Marriage* curriculum which focuses on helping young people develop skills to resist sexual activity until marriage. Sixth grade students are program participants and 11th and 12th grade students serve as teen peer mentors and receive 30 hours of training before they begin teaching the younger students.

During the 2005-2006 school year the program was presented to 2,229 sixth grade students by 308 trained high school teen leaders. From 1996 to 2006, over 43,000 young people have participated in the program.

4-H T.G.I.F. is one of five programs selected to be evaluated in-depth by Gerald and Glennelle Halpin, from Auburn University. They are assessing participant's knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions regarding abstinence-only-until-marriage.

Probably the single most impressive program outcome was revealed in a comparison of 4-H T.G.I.F. participants to survey responses of students who had not received the abstinence message. In 1994-95 prior to the beginning of 4-H T.G.I.F., students in grades 9-12 in two of the seven 4-H T.G.I.F. counties, Choctaw and Sumter, were administered a general health questionnaire. Again, in 2000-2001, a subset of items from the same

questionnaire to ninth through twelfth grade students in Choctaw and Sumter counties was administered.

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Research results indicate that among those students who had participated in the 4-H T.G.I.F. program as sixth graders, the percentage reporting never having had sex was generally higher than for the students surveyed in 1994-95 before implementation of the 4-H T.G.I.F. program.

The differences were dramatically different for ninth graders with 42.5 percent of the 4-H T.G.I.F. participants reporting never having had sex as compared to 25.3 percent of the comparison group. Slightly less impressive results were obtained for tenth graders with 34.4 percent of the 4-H T.G.I.F. participants reporting never having had sex as compared to 22.9 percent of the comparison group.

Since the program began the teen birth rate in Alabama declined 29% between 1991 and 2004 saving taxpayers an estimated 103 million dollars in 2004 alone.



Extension Agents, Denise Shirley, left, and Elaine Alberson share abstinence-only educational materials with 4-H T.G.I.F. (Teens Getting Involved for the Future) Teen Leaders.