

## Contraceptive program educates, protects Darlington teens

Posted on Tuesday, February 14, 2017

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A recent report released by the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancies shows that the state has made strides to decrease the number of teen pregnancies each year.

The report shows that in 2015, the state moved to 16th in the nation for teen pregnancies; the previous year it had been number 13 (In this listing, the higher the number the better).



Darlington County, on the other hand, moved two spots down the list to 14th. A First Steps of Darlington County program is working to put contraceptives in the hands of those who need it most, making sure that if teens are having sex they are having safe sex.

Ashley Holman said that AC/DC, which stands for Access Condoms in Darlington County, uses partnerships in the community to reach 15 to 19-year-olds before they become a teen pregnancy statistic.

“This is a [free](#) and confidential condom distribution program,” Holman said. “The distribution sites are based out of local businesses, beauty parlors, barber shops, small [grocery](#) stores; places in the community where people need them. Not only do we have business involved but we also have individuals.”



“Some places, due to their funding or the values of their organization, they are not able to give out condoms. In some of those cases someone, as an individual, can give out the condoms.”

Holman said that their [marketing and branding](#) allow them to advertise distribution sites subtly.

“We have decals, one for males and one for females,” Holman said. “Whichever demographic the place is more targeted to they can put up that decals and people know and it doesn’t have to say ‘Free Condoms’; it’s a little more discrete.”

Anyone is welcome to take the condoms, Holman said, and they are finding that sometimes it is grandparents taking them for their grandchildren who they know are [sexually active](#).

It is important for anyone who is sexually active to remember that pregnancy is not the only thing that condoms prevent against. Using condoms can also prevent sexually transmitted infections, such as Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. The Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancies report reveals that South Carolina ranked nationally in the Top 10 for rates of several STI’s for all age groups, not just teens, in 2015.

Holman said that she has been surprised at some of the partners who have become involved with AC/DC.

“We’ve had a couple of people that we thought would be on board and they weren’t,” Holman said. “We’ve also had some people that we thought there would be no way they would participate and they’ve approached us. The faith-based community is very supportive for the most part, which is very interesting; no one would have thought that.”

Ensuring privacy has been a huge factor when it comes to setting up a site for distribution, Holman said.

“We have had to reevaluate the way we market it for some places,” Holman said. “It can be that they are in a little bit more inconspicuous display or in the bathroom, that way if there are children coming in or someone who may be opposed to it, it is not being shoved in their face.”

The AC/DC program has around 20 sites in the county including Gloria’s Shear Essence in Darlington, Miracle’s Hair Design in Hartsville and St. Luke United [Methodist Church](#) in Timmonsville. For more

information about the program, or to find a distribution site, visit [darlingtoncountyfirststeps2.tru-m.com/35](http://darlingtoncountyfirststeps2.tru-m.com/35)