

Fresno Regional Foundation awards grants to reduce teen pregnancies

By Carmen George

With teenage pregnancy rates in the central San Joaquin Valley consistently the worst in the state, leaders of the Fresno Regional Foundation on Wednesday awarded nearly \$357,000 in grants to seven organizations committed to reducing those numbers.

Each year it's a kind of "musical chairs" between Tulare, Kings, Madera and Fresno counties for who has the highest teen pregnancy rate, said Sandra Flores, senior program officer for the foundation.

The grants -- which have been awarded for the past seven years -- largely focus on education in hopes of taking the subject "out of the shadows," Flores said.

Flores said the grants are making a difference. Since starting outreach at Orosi High School in Tulare County, leaders of The Latino Commission -- one of the grant recipients -- were told teen pregnancy rates at the school dropped 50% since 2010, Flores said.

2014 Grant Recipients

- Fresno Barrios Unidos: \$100,000 to help teens with decision making, along with presentations for 400 parents about how to talk with their children about sex.
- Boys 2 Men-Girls 2 Women Foundation: \$90,000 to serve youth in Pinedale in northwest Fresno. Program leaders say they are committed to overcoming cultural barriers in the predominantly Latino community to provide reproductive health education.
- The Latino Commission: \$80,000 to empower Latina youth to reduce risks and become educators/mentors for peers about the dangers of teen pregnancy, STDs and HIV. The grant also funds community forums.
- Madera Coalition for Community Justice: \$25,000 for sex education and services in "teen pregnancy hot spots," along with education for parents.
- Novelas Educativas: \$21,908 to promote sex education, with a special focus on Latino parents, in Huron, Farmersville, east Fresno, Madera, Parlier and Woodlake.
- Woodlake High School: \$20,000 for a leadership program for young men which includes teen pregnancy prevention education.
- ACT for Women and Girls: \$20,000 for a teen pregnancy prevention program in Woodlake in Tulare County.

The Fresno Regional Foundation has awarded close to \$1.5 million in grants aimed at preventing teen pregnancy over the years, Flores said. Funding for this grant cycle was provided by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and The California Wellness Foundation.

The Fresno Regional Foundation was founded in 1966 to improve the quality of life for residents in the Valley and foothills. More information about the foundation's work to prevent teen pregnancy is available through a new publication, "Investing in the Future," and can be viewed online at <http://fresnoregfoundation.org/cbo/v2/teenpregnancygc.html>.

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